



Center for Independent Living

*Our mission is to support people with disabilities
to realize their full potential.*

Fairmont, Mankato and New Ulm

(507) 345-7139

www.smilescil.org

April 2022



A wooden ramp that meets ADA requirements and local building codes can be tailored to fit the space and homeowners' needs.

A temporary ramp can be put in place until a permanent solution is found.



We need ramp builders

Each year, SMILES Center for Independent Living builds dozens of ramps -- both temporary and permanent -- for people whose independence would be limited without them. We're the only local non-profit organization that does!

As demand grows, so does our need for ramp builders, however.

No experience is needed and the positions are paid. They're perfect for retirees and students who have basic carpentry skills are interested in helping people in our region stay independent.

We build for veterans, kids and adults in wheelchairs, and anyone else who needs improved access. Ramps meet Americans with Disabilities (ADA) standards and building code requirements, and can be tailored to fit homeowners' specifications as much as possible.

If interested, give us a call at (507) 345-7139.

Assistive Technology can help on short- or long-term basis

Are you aware that SMILES has a lending library of assistive technology that can help you decide which technology works best for you? Devices are loaned for up to one month.

SMILES offers assessments and then can suggest which devices might be most appropriate for you. The lending library provides an opportunity to test drive before buying. Call Howard at (507) 345-7139; hrosten@smilescil.org



SMILES adds people to serve consumers

SMILES Center for Independent Living has welcomed several new employees. **Mike Lagerquist** started in December as Community Education & Development Director.

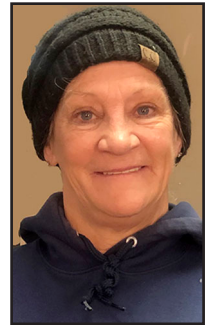
*New
faces*

In his role, Mike is responsible for maintaining community awareness of the services that SMILES offers to people with disabilities. He brings more than 35 years of experience in media and public relations to this new position.



Mike Lagerquist

Nancy VanHoudt started at SMILES six months ago and is an Independent Living Skills Trainer out of Mankato. After attending cook/chef training at South Central College, Nancy worked in restaurants for much of her work life. She is enjoying working with her consumers, getting to know them and their needs so she can help them live independently. One of 11 kids, she has two children and two grandchildren.



Nancy VanHoudt

Katie Hanson started in July as Personal Care Attendant (PCA) Choice Manager at SMILES. She plans, develops and coordinates PCA



Katie Hanson

Choice Services for consumers, conducts consumer and PCA intakes and facilitates the development of consumer care plans. Katie worked the last 10 years as a Lead Behavior Therapist at both the Minnesota Autism Center and Five Rivers Mental Health Clinic. Originally from a small town in South Dakota, she came to Minnesota to attend Minnesota State University, graduating with a degree in Sociology.



Holly Unander

Holly Unander recently joined SMILES as an Independent Living Skills Trainer. She worked at the Saint Peter Food Co-op for five years, in different departments, and loves working with people and supporting them in finding activities and hobbies they enjoy. Her favorite department at the Co-op was the health and nutrition, and she loves learning and studying nutrition. She enjoys gardening, foraging, hiking, swimming, riding bike and camping. Other hobbies are hunting and fishing, drawing and painting, dancing and climbing, and cooking.

Amber Jacobsen started as an Administrative Assistant at SMILES in October 2021. Previously, she was employed as Residential Manager at Elm Homes in Waseca and an Office Manager at Kuch Chiropractic. Amber lives in Mankato with her four daughters. In her free time, she enjoys camping, fishing, reading and spending time with family and friends.



Amber Jacobsen

SMILES has job openings now

The following jobs are available. For a complete job description, visit smilescil.org/careers:

Independent Living Skills Specialist, remote, Region 9 area, \$14.14-\$15.29/hour depending on experience and education.

Independent Living Skills Trainer, remote, Region 9 area, \$11.96-\$12.95/hour.

Personal Care Attendant, in consumers' homes, Region 9 area, \$14.25/hour.



SMILES hit the waves for adaptive water skiing



Above: A water skier takes off to enjoy some water skiing on Madison Lake. SMILES offered the activity for three hours over five Wednesdays last summer.

Right: A skier is prepared to take off water skiing while friends and supporters look on. For just \$10 per week, SMILES offered adaptive water skiing as a special opportunity for people with disabilities.



Fun on the lake

SMILES Center for Independent Living was able to offer adaptive waterskiing to individuals last summer thanks to wonderful volunteer involvement. SMILES met with volunteer instructors Mark Origer, Jen Frazee, and Grace Hermer to determine location and equipment needs. SMILES had equipment intended to be used before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The volunteers had previously provided adaptive waterski sessions at Duck Lake and the plan was to use that location at the county park landing. A SMILES employee contacted Scott and Corralee Borgmeier of Madison Lake about the possibility of offering the sessions on Madison Lake, utilizing their accessible walkway and dock. SMILES staff and the volunteer instructors met with Scott and Corralee at their home and determined it would be a great location.

Through the planning process, the instructors contacted their past cohorts and SMILES re-

cruited the volunteers needed to support the instructors. After promoting the event in the North Mankato Fun Days Parade, SMILES and the volunteers held the first session July 14, with weekly sessions through Aug. 4.

Volunteer instructors were Mark Origer, Grace Hermer, Sue Olness, and Joel Rimstad. Shannon Bode was the "Dock Boss," making sure volunteers were able to get the skier ready with the correct sized equipment, and more. Scott Borgmeier, Arianna Borgmeier, and Addison Frazee took turns spotting skiers on the wave runner. Jen Frazee drove the boat.

Other volunteers were David Unander, Holly Unander, Amber Jacobsen, Kari Albrecht, and Jenn Jones. These volunteers helped skiers to get ready to ski and return to shore, and guided/held the boat at the dock.

We could use a few more volunteers to be able to rotate duties and allow time to visit with skiers and their families/friends who come to watch and cheer. Contact SMILES if interested in helping.



SMILES services help people with disabilities

ADVOCACY

Advocacy or standing up for one's rights is a vital component for people with disabilities. Advocacy represents a series of actions taken and issues that are addressed in order to change the "what is" to "what should be." Individual Advocacy involves both advocating and teaching self-advocacy skills to people with disabilities in order to solve problems related to their legal, civil and human rights. Systems Advocacy involves teaching and supporting organizations in the process of changing and educating the public in the development of policies regarding people with disabilities.

For more information, contact Jennifer at jjones@smilescil.org or call (507) 345-7139.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

SMILES assists people with disabilities as they work to eliminate barriers. Assistive technology, any customized item, piece of equipment or product system used to improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities, is a primary tool in this effort. The program is available to individuals with disabilities, family members, service providers, and the community at large. The program offers assessments, training and one-on-one support, a Lending and Demonstration Library that allows individuals to try a piece of technology in their home or work environment for 30 days to determine if the technology meets their need(s), and assistive technology demonstrations within the Region 9 area.

For more information, contact Howard at hrosten@smilescil.org or call (507) 345-7139

RAMP PROJECTS

Ramps help eliminate barriers for people with physical disabilities and is one of the first steps

to an independent lifestyle. SMILES works with the home owner to design and build an affordable and functional residential ramp that suits the individual's needs. SMILES offers three types of ramps: wood, modular metal, and temporary suitcase.

For more information, contact Howard at hrosten@smilescil.org or call (507) 345-7139.

CONSUMER DIRECTED COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Consumer Directed Community Supports (CDCS) is a service option that gives individuals more flexibility and responsibility to direct their services and supports, including hiring and managing direct care staff. When a person chooses CDCS, that person will decide how to spend the budget allowance based on their specific needs, hire people such as family, friends, and neighbors to help, and can choose as much responsibility desired to hire, train, and manage workers.

For more information, contact Erica at erewitzer@smilescil.org or (507) 345-7139.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS TRAINING

People come into the Independent Living Program by contacting SMILES to inquire about our services themselves, are referred by other service providers that SMILES collaborates with or through county social services. They may already know what they need, or SMILES can help them with determining their needs through an assessment.

Independent Living is a goal-driven program as determined by the consumer, and continues to provide support as needed. It is intended to provide youth and adults with disabilities the opportunity to make appropriate choices and learn the



Independent Living services (continued)

skills that will assist them to achieve the individual's desired level of independence. Training sessions are offered on an individual or small group basis and can take place in a consumer's home, in the community, or at the Independent Living Center offices.

For more information, contact Erica at erewitzer@smilescil.org or (507) 345-7139.

PCA CHOICE OPTION

The PCA Choice Option is an alternative option for the traditional PCA Program in Minnesota. Unlike traditional PCA services, the Choice Option allows for more control of services by the consumer. The aspects that increase a consumer's control of their program under the Choice Option are decision-making; staff recruitment, hiring, training and terminations; full participation in the development of their plan of cares; PCA pay rates and Verification of timesheets; and their choice of and full collaboration with a Qualified Professional

The services provided under the Choice Option, similar to traditional programs, are required to be determined as "medically" necessary as the assessment determines the need for services described in the Service Plan.

For more information, contact Katie at khanson@smilescil.org or (507) 345-7139.

PEER MENTORING

SMILES Peer Mentor program emphasizes the direct involvement of nonprofessional individuals with disabilities as role models providing independent living services to consumers.

The program is based on the belief that some supported services are best provided by people who have a disability. Mentors share experienc-

es, assist in establishing goals to increase independence and community integration and provide educational and advocacy resources. Peer mentorship is offered individually or in a group setting.

For more information, contact Jennifer at jjones@smilescil.org or (507) 345-7139.

YOUTH ASSISTANCE: AGES 14-22

The transition from school to community is significant for every young person with a disability. Our transition program provides a bridge between the security of school and the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life. Small group independent living skills training sessions are provided within the school and community. This program is available to students with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 22. Transition training sessions are scheduled within the student's school setting and/or their local communities. These sessions will occur in a small group format of no less than four students. The focus will be "hands on" practical skill training, information and resources.

For assistance in Mankato or Waseca, contact Erica at erewitzer@smilescil.org or (507) 345-7139; in Fairmont contact Heather at hschultze@smilescil.org or (507) 235-3488; in New Ulm contact Sarah at skosak@smilescil.org or (507) 354-7106.

NURSING HOME RELOCATION

Nursing Home Relocation assists persons with disabilities in nursing homes to relocate to an independent living situation by accessing supportive services needed to support community-based living.

Transition services include:

- Coordination services with other team members involved in the case
- Assistance with completing paperwork

Services (continued)

- Assistance locating housing options
- Ordering equipment and medical supplies
- Setting up PCA services
- Finding assistance with moving
- Obtaining household furnishings

For more information, contact Jennifer at jjones@smilescil.org or (507) 345-7139.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITIES ACT (W.I.O.A.)

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act is a new regulation under federal law that started on July 22, 2016. This new work rule provides choices to individuals who are earning less than the minimum wage at least once a year, to learn about the services and supports available to assist them in obtaining competitive, integrated employment.

SMILES Center for Independent Living is an advocacy based organization and has no financial stake in the WIOA process. The SMILES advocacy team works as the designee for Vocational Rehabilitation Services to carry out this process so individuals are informed of their choices.

The SMILES advocacy team provides information meetings to people participating in sub-minimum wage employment and their parents/guardians when applicable, and facilitating conversations around pursuing competitive employment.

For more information, contact Jennifer at jjones@smilescil.org or (507) 345-7139.

Get on our electronic mailing list

If you would like to receive our newsletter sent electronically to your mailbox, visit this site and provide your name and email address: <https://smilescil.org/services/>

Summer parade

SMILES is looking forward to participating in several area parades this summer and would love to have you join us or keep an eye out for us.



From North Mankato Fun Days, 2018.

This summer, look for us in the Interlaken Heritage Days Parade in Fairmont Saturday, June 11 and the North Mankato Fun Days Parade Saturday, July 9.

Thank you for your donation

We at SMILES Center for Independent Living rely on grants, donations and fees to users to cover our costs each year. A donation from you, on a one-time or monthly basis, will help us provide essential services to help people with disabilities reach their full potential. In addition, it can help us provide additional recreational opportunities and services.

To make a donation, visit our web site at <https://smilescil.org> and click on the "Donate" button.

Thank you for your generous donation to SMILES Center for Independent Living.