

THE MINNESOTA OLMSTEAD ACADEMY, PILOT YEAR

# DISABILITY INTEGRATION PROJECTS

A REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

SEPTEMBER 14, 2015

SEPTEMBER 2015

*a program of*  
**ACT**

*Advocating Change Together*

*advancing disability rights by building self-advocate leaders*

*©2015 Advocating Change Together*

# CONTENTS

**Advocating Change Together**

Advocating Change Together (ACT) is a grass-roots disability rights organization run by and for people with developmental disabilities. ACT’s mission is help people across disabilities see themselves as part of larger disability rights moment and make connections to other civil and human rights struggles.

**Olmstead Academy**

The Olmstead Academy is a program of ACT. The pilot year was funded with the generous support of the Otto Bremer Foundation. Thanks also to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development for program supports as well as providing a meeting space for the Academy.

**Self-Advocates Minnesota**

Self-Advocates Minnesota (SAM) is a statewide network of groups established in 2007 to help people with developmental disabilities know their rights and demand those rights through personal and group action. The SAM network is coordinated and administered by ACT. Each of SAM’s six regions participated in the first Olmstead Academy.

**Contents** .....2

**Program for today’s event** .....3

**About the Olmstead Academy**

**Executive summary** .....4

**Program evaluation**.....5

**Team Project Summaries**

**Northwest team** .....6

**Northeast team** .....8

**Metro team** .....10

**Southwest team**.....12

**Southeast team**.....14

**Central team** .....16

**Academy Leadership** .....18



# EVENT PROGRAM

## Report to the Community Olmstead Academy Pilot Year Public event hosted by Judge Donovan Frank

September 14, 2015  
1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

Devitt Ceremonial Courtroom  
Warren E. Burger Federal Building & United States Courthouse  
316 North Robert Street  
St. Paul, MN

-----  
**1:30 p.m. Program**

- Opening procession: Academy participants
- Welcome: Judge Frank
- Academy overview: Mary Kay Kennedy
- Presentations of project results: Six regional teams
- Comments by Judge Frank
- Closing song

**2:30 p.m. Reception**

Guest are invited to join Academy participants for light refreshments in the Jury Assembly Room (also on the 1st floor)

### A Dazzling Bouquet

Refrain:  
 This is a place where everybody's welcome.  
 I know it's true 'cause I got through the door.  
 We are a dazzling bouquet of every kind of flower.  
 Jump in the vase, 'cause we've got space for more.

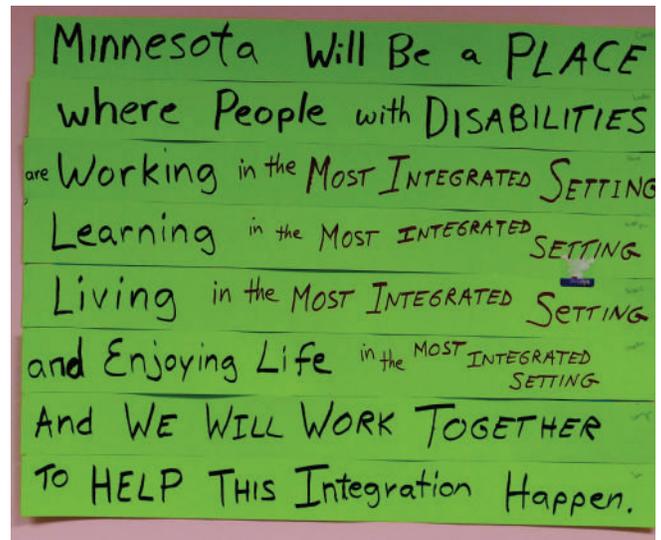
1. Come here, all you six foot gladiolas.  
 Come all you purple lilacs shining bright.  
 Come let us all bloom together in one garden:  
 A carnival of fragrance and delight. (Refrain)

2. We don't simply cross our fingers hoping  
 We're digging up the soil around the state  
 And we must all plant the seeds of integration  
 Till every face will grace the grand bouquet.

(by Bret Hestia)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Building self advocate leaders by working on projects to advance community integration.



## Olmstead Academy Pilot Year: Building self-advocate leaders by working on issues to advance community integration.

### TIMELINE

September 2014 through September 2015.

### ACADEMY GOAL

Create a culture within Minnesota where self-advocacy is a foundational piece in the state's Olmstead plan and self-advocates are playing meaningful roles in its implementation.

### ACADEMY STRUCTURE

The Olmstead Academy is a 12-month program featuring two multi-day training sessions with required field work on Disability Integration Projects. Participants enroll as teams of three (two self-advocates,

one ally) from around the state. Teams learn both leadership skills and organizing tools for creating change to advance community integration. Each team develops and implements a project in their home community.

### PROGRAM FEATURES

- Team-based participation – two self-advocates and one ally.
- Participatory, innovative, proven methods of Popular Education and Kolb theory.
- Mentors assist each team to create and complete project.
- Each team receives \$10,000 – \$15,000 to implement a

project in their community.

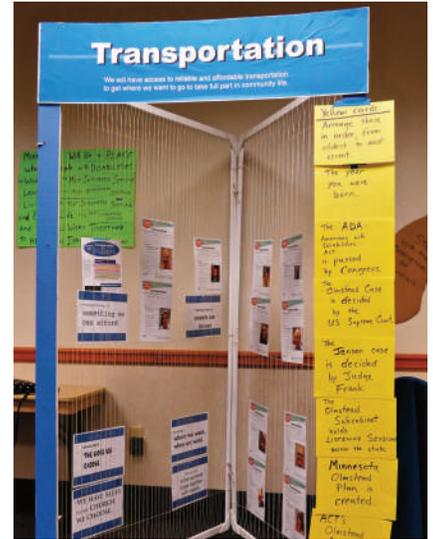
- Participants build relationships with key state allies during “dinner with leaders.”

### DISABILITY INTEGRATION PROJECTS

Each team chooses and leads a local project to advance integration in their community.

[See pp. 6-17 for results of each of these six projects.]

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

A Program Effectiveness Assessment was conducted following the Olmstead Academy six-day curriculum. The assessment was conducted by Cheryl Jensen of Strategic Consulting and Coaching. Below is an excerpt from the report.



Phase one of the Olmstead Academy was transformational. Through experiential learning activities and designed disability integration projects, self-advocates learned the history and goal of the plan. With their involvement in the Olmstead Academy, self-advocates found their voice as well as increased personal and group power.

### Additional Key Findings:

Participants view themselves and other participants of the academy as leaders.

Participants increased their leadership skills by participating in experimental activities, identifying and creating disability integration projects.

Participants fully understand the Olmstead Plan. Participants understand how the plan impacts their lives and the lives of other people with disabilities.

Participants believe they have the knowledge to educate others on the Olmstead plan in their community.

# NORTHWEST TEAM

The Community Inclusion Plan: inserting ourselves into longstanding community events.



## WHERE WE LIVE:

East Grand Forks, Minnesota

## WHO WE ARE:

James Lee and Patty McGlynn are our Olmstead team leaders, along with ally Carla Tice, and 89 people with disabilities who live in NW Minnesota.



## WHAT WE DID

Our community has three big, popular annual community events.

- Annual Grand Cities Art Festival
- Cat's Incredible (event and fishing contest)
- Community Garden

We wanted to have people with disabilities fully included in these three local events. So we took steps to make that happen.

## WHAT HAPPENED

We worked with the planners of each of these three events to get ourselves inserted and included. And we were successful in doing so.

Our own acting troupe performed "East Side Greasers" at the Grand Cities Festival.

Our community garden plot is producing produce like mad.

We played several roles at Cat's Incredible, the community event and fishing contest: our Olmstead group set up a fun tent for kids, where they could learn about inclusion through a fishing game. We also assisted where needed throughout the event.

# NORTHWEST TEAM



"They were were fabulous! How am I going to be able to follow the Greasers?"

*the performer who followed the East Side Greasers*

## WHAT WE LEARNED

**Perserverence:** We were initially rebuffed by the arts committee, but we persevered, got our actors included and our production got terrific reviews.

**Inclusion matters to everyone:** The East Grand Forks Fire Department and Cabella's sponsored the Cat's Incredible, over 250 people entered to catch the biggest catfish on the Red River. In a video that one of our East Side Self Advocates made, the Chief of the Fire Department, said they hope we will come and be part of this event again. This event took us side by side, other vendors and groups. We also provided transportation for

people with disabilities to attend the event.

**Work to build new relationships:** We have a plan to make new community friends every time we work together in our community garden. Each Thursday we had a garden party, where we did our garden work and shared some lemonade with fellow gardeners. It's working, both for us and for other gardeners--we're getting to know one another.

**We give to others:** By working to provide help in the Cats Incredible, we demonstrated that people with disabilities serve others and serve the public--we don't only receive services.

## NEXT STEPS

We feel so encouraged about the increased integration that happened in our community due to our project. These efforts will have lasting effects; our participation in all three community events will continue next year. Immediately after our production at the Art Festival, the organizing committee invited us to come back in 2016. Likewise for Cat's Incredible: next year, we already have two teams excited to enter the catfish fishing contest. And we have a garden plot reserved for 2016.

# NORTHEAST TEAM

## Access Express: providing spontaneous transportation to facilitate community integration



**BEFORE:**  
← **The main option before our project**

STRIDE -- Duluth Transit Authority.

A van serving multiple people and multiple stops; users need to call three to seven days ahead to get transport guaranteed.

### WHERE WE LIVE:

Duluth, Minnesota

### WHO WE ARE:

Linda Merkel and Rosemary Hanson: Olmstead Academy leaders; Samantha Thompson, ally

Also included was a community council made of up an additional 10 people: some self-advocates, some other nonprofit agency members and some allies.

### WHAT WE DID

People who rely on current transportation options have a difficult time getting out into the community. They have to schedule their rides 3-7 days in advance.

We did a pilot project to give people the power to schedule spontaneous transportation in their lives.

We gave 18 participants a set of taxi vouchers. They could use them to decide spontaneously where they wanted to go.

### WHAT HAPPENED

People were given taxi vouchers to use over a three month period on spontaneous transportation. A Pre- and Post- survey was given to each participant to see what kind of impact the voucher had in the end. Tracking was completed each month to show how much of their voucher they were using and to where they were going.

Each person got \$450 to uses in the 3 months/ approximately \$150 per month. (This was tracked through charge slips that were totaled at the end of each month by the cab company and then given to Arc Northland to call and notify each participant of the remaining balance.)

They were used between May 2015 and July 2015. The taxi company reported that it seemed to be very



# NORTHEAST TEAM

**AFTER:**  
**What we offered  
to participants  
instead** →



Spontaneous Transportation-Custom Cab- average wait time 30 min

**"If someone without a disability can go to the mall on short notice, we should be able to also."**

*Participant*

successful and many were asking for a continued program. Three participants went over budget, 17 used the voucher, and 8 people had less than \$100 each remaining on their voucher when it was completed.

People went to the mall, Sam's Club (bulk food shopping for parties), restaurants, casinos, emergency medical appointments, Plasma Center, Goodwill, library, local landmarks, friends' houses, hobby shops, and yoga.

Although Access Express did not work for everyone in the anticipated way, many of the barriers that were addressed in the pre-survey were no longer a barrier when having the taxi voucher.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

### **Spontaneous transportation equals community integration.**

People involved in our pilot project mostly reported great satisfaction. They were out in the community more. They felt that they were allowed freedoms of going somewhere spontaneously and had many more options and choices when it came to community inclusion and activities to attend.

With a spur of the moment option to just call a cab, community integration was easier to achieve in their lives; they no longer needed to make plans far in advance or rely on others for transportation.

## NEXT STEPS

People with disabilities continuously say that lack of transportation is one of their top issues.

We will seek funding to continue and expand this voucher project. We hope this small pilot may be a springboard in spurring state and private firms to more creatively meet these needs. We call on them to fund similar efforts in a large-scale way.

# METRO TEAM

## Explore Prepare Act: we lead job prepare trainings on what do I need to know as I pursue a community job



### WHERE WE LIVE:

Twin Cities metro area

### WHO WE ARE:

Larry Lubbers, Ruth Agre, Carol Robinson and Nikki Villavicencio as Olmstead Academy leaders and Rick Cardenas and Mary Fenske, Nick Wilkie and Patrick Mitchell as allies.

### WHAT WE DID

We expanded and modified a pre-existing training package developed by the ICI of Massachusetts. This resource is designed for participants who are considering working in the community after years in segregated settings. It presents the attitudes, skills and available assistance a person needs as they approach a community job.

### WHAT HAPPENED

Forty (40) people with disabilities attended four (4) sets of sessions at three different segregated settings. Through discussion, videos and activities, the attendees explored how to find jobs that match their interests and strengths, how benefits and wages interact, and why working in the community is worth leaving the comfort of what they know and are used to.

Self-advocates served as trainers in some of the sessions and shared



## METRO TEAM



“ I applied for three jobs last week.”

*participant*

“ I went to a job fair and talked about different kinds of jobs I want to do.”

*participant*



“People love the idea of having a community job but then they have to confront a lot of fears and insecurities to overcome--thanks to years of false messages telling them it’s scary, it’s daunting.”

*workshop participant support ally*

### WHAT HAPPENED, CONT.

their experiences of community work. Participants report:

- 100% of participants said they understand that people are better off financially with a real job for real pay.
- 75% of participants report that they have (or are planning to) talked to family, social worker or service provider about goals to explore work options
- 60% of participants are able to name key supports they can use in finding a job
- 60% of participants state that they have a better understanding of the types of jobs they should look for based on their interests and skills.

### WHAT WE LEARNED

**Two workshop sessions is not enough.** We raised questions but got no satisfactory conclusions. We noticed that participants needed more time to discuss and process the huge change of leaving a place of familiarity and comfort for a community job.

**Internal fears are a barrier.** Most people say they want to work; but then are blocked from moving forward by a set of internal factors:

- a lack of confidence
- fear of unwelcoming co-workers
- fear of a change in routine

### NEXT STEPS

Because of the feedback received from the first sessions, each training has been expanded to three sessions, giving extra time to address confidence and self-advocacy skills. DEED has provided additional funds to present Explore-Prepare-Act seven more times in the metro area in the next year. We plan to then adapt the program for people in Greater Minnesota.

If the state is serious about expanding peer-to-peer supports, we need to find a way to have full-time paid peer mentors.

# SOUTHWEST TEAM

## Disability Pride and Power: teaching our fellow citizens about the importance of integration using theater



### WHERE WE LIVE:

Mankato, Minnesota and surrounding communities

### WHO WE ARE:

Carrie Varner and Nate Clark, Olmstead Academy leaders, Wilbur Neushwander-Frink, ally. Members of People First of Lyon County and Redwood County for the Born This Way groups and Aktion Club

Theatre of Mankato and the United We Stand Players of New Ulm for the play. Our SW Community 12



Council (pictured above right), a group of regional self-advocates and allies, played a big role in spreading the word and volunteering to usher at the play.

### WHAT WE DID

We created two presentations to help change community attitudes about people with disabilities and our right to integration. We presented an original play called, "The Other Side." The theme of play was community inclusion, accessibility and love. We also developed a panel presentation titled "Born this Way, Here to Stay," led by two groups. This presentation informs school and civic groups of disability and how to break down barriers to integration.

### WHAT HAPPENED

The play "The Other Side" was performed over two days to over 800 people from the Mankato community. Seventy-five (75) self-advocates acted in the play

The panel "Born this Way. Here to Stay" presented to community groups and school children in Marshall and Redwood Falls, with 6-8 self-advocates on each panel.

Fifty (50) people are involved in our SW Community Council, which meets about every two months on behalf of our Olmstead Project.

A small ensemble of Aktion Club Theatre actors also did a performance for the Secretary of

# SOUTHWEST TEAM



"I love going around the community doing presentations and getting to know people. I want to keep doing this."

*Panel member who participated in the Born this Way events*

## WHAT HAPPENED, CONT.

State's Office at the Voting Rights Celebration in August to over 200 people, called "Silence to Voices: People with Disabilities and Voting".

## WHAT WE LEARNED

**When lots of participants are involved in a performance, the community takes notice.** These projects have placed people with disabilities -- the nearly one hundred participants--out and about in the community, squarely in the public eye and rubbing shoulders along side everyone else.

The community has taken notice. Surveys and media attention of the

two projects have shown great approval from the audiences.

**And the participants have felt empowered.** The performers and panel members feel proud, recognized and included because of their participation. The Born This Way groups are thrilled to have the opportunity to go to schools and present to the public.

## NEXT STEPS

Plans are underway for two play performances and five panel presentations in 2016. We will also have a booth at Mankato's Pride Fest in September.

The model of a large, participatory play or panel would be easy to replicate in other regions, and we would be glad to share our process with other communities.

# SOUTHEAST TEAM

## From Person-Centered-Plan to Person Centered Action: One-on-one peer mentoring to help people get their plans actually implemented



### WHERE WE LIVE:

Rochester, Minnesota

### WHO WE ARE:

Charlie Applequist, Olmstead team leader.

Melissa Evans, ally

Cheryl Gardner-Gionzoli, ally

### WHAT WE DID

We provided assistance to seven people who had previously drawn up a Person Centered Plan, helping them get action on their stated action items.

### WHAT HAPPENED

Our team's peer-mentor met with seven individuals who had a person-centered-plan on file. For each participant, their plan was reviewed with peer mentor Charlie Applequist. Charlie helped people look at their goals, think through on how to move them forward, and take concrete steps to get things rolling.



# SOUTHEAST TEAM



“Being a peer-mentor is important to me. I want to do good and make a difference.”

*peer mentor Charlie Applequist*

## WHAT WE LEARNED

**Peer support takes a lot of one-on-one time to work properly.**

Peers can help people find resources and give support so the plans become real.

Because a peer has also faced the challenges of a disability, they are well-regarded by the person seeking assistance.

## NEXT STEPS

Integration in the community is a major goal of person-centered planning, and also of the Olmstead Plan. The success of person centered planning can be magnified by peer-to-peer support.

Finding supportive, dedicated peer mentors will be a challenge until this role becomes a steady, full-time, paid job. We'd like to work with the state to pursue this end.

# CENTRAL TEAM

## Agents of Inclusion: peers lead workshop to help self-advocates have a stronger say in their person-centered-plan



Two-day, peer-led skills seminar at ARC Retreat Center, Grandy, MN



### WHERE WE LIVE:

East-central, Minnesota

### WHO WE ARE:

Nathan Miller and Steve Peck as Olmstead Academy team leaders, along with ally Maggie Treichel



### WHAT WE DID

Our Central Olmstead team knows that people need information and support as they develop a Person Centered Plan and then as they try to bring the plan into reality.

So we hosted a two-day seminar to tell people about their rights and to encourage and support their ideas for how they could have a more integrated community life.

### WHAT HAPPENED

We hosted a two-day seminar to tell people about their rights and to encourage and support their ideas for how they could have a more integrated community life. We had sessions on rights and on realizing your goals and dreams.

Ten (10) self-advocates attended the seminar. They received peer-to-peer support both during seminar sessions and also in followup support. Of the ten participants who were involved in this project, eight (8) made changes in their personal life that resulted in greater inclusion in their community -- and much more satisfaction with their lives.

# CENTRAL TEAM



“First they said NO. Then when I talked about my rights they found money for me to have supported employment.”

*seminar participant Savannah Knutson*

## WHAT WE LEARNED

**Knowing your rights before doing your person-centered-plan makes a big difference in the outcome.**

Participants learn their rights and options especially well when it's coming from someone whose personal experience is like their own, the recipients can easily see that they have choice and decision-making power in their lives.

**Peer-to-peer support is also an empowering experience for the giver,** the peer giving the mentoring. It is important for each of us to see ourselves as having something to give, to help others.

## NEXT STEPS

Community integration depends on person-centered planning and peer-to-peer support; these are key values of the state's Olmstead Plan. There has been a statewide focus on person-centered training for staff and professionals. **It looks to us like an equal focus is needed on training for the people with disabilities themselves.** Doing a “my rights” training in advance of a planning meeting can make an impact on how someone's person-centered plans get written and implemented.

# LEADERSHIP

## **Program Design**

Mary Kay Kennedy  
Bret Hesla

## **Program Facilitation**

Mary Kay Kennedy  
Bret Hesla

## **Session Leaders**

Mary Kay Kennedy, Advocating Change Together  
Bret Hesla, Advocating Change Together  
Mary Fenske, Self-Advocates Minnesota  
Galen Smith, Service Employees International Union  
Linda Breitag, Professional musician  
Carolyn Levy, Hamline University  
Selima Seale, Hamline University  
Patrick Mitchell, Advocating Change Together

## **Team Project Mentors**

Mary Fenske, Self Advocates Minnesota  
Corbett Laubignat, Independent consultant  
Pat Pendleton: Retired high school teacher  
Kristi Rudelius-Palmer, University of Minnesota Human Rights  
Center  
Galen Smith, Service Employees International Union

## **Dinner Hosts**

Joan Willshire, Executive Director, MN State Council on  
Disability  
Deb Holtz, Minnesota State Ombudsman  
Sean Burke, Attorney, MN Disability Law Center  
Rebecca Covington, Executive Director, Minnesota Consortium  
for Citizens with Disabilities  
Alex Bartolic, Commissioner, MN Dept. of Human Services  
Darlene Zangara, Director, Olmstead Implementation Office,  
Roberta Opheim, Minnesota State Ombudsman  
Colleen Wieck, Executive Director, Minnesota Governor's  
Council on Developmental Disabilities

## **Program Consultants**

Special thanks to the program design consultants, including  
Colleen Wieck, Chris Bell, Deb Holtz, Galen Smith and Mary  
Fenske.

---

# NOTES

(this page blank)

