

# Enjoying Life's Little Luxuries

# FACES OF HOME



Many of us take for granted the little luxuries that come from having a place of our own. Having our own kitchen where we can cook what we want to eat, having a spacious bed to sleep in at night, and having the freedom to entertain guests whenever we please.

Two North Dakota men who are supported by ABLE Inc., a private, nonprofit organization that provides residential and day support to people with intellectual and development disabilities, are enjoying these little luxuries for the first time.

George "Hoppy" Vogel and David Hippe moved into their own apartments at The Landing in Bowman, ND, in July. Prior to the move, they lived in the same community in a Transitional Community Living Facility, a place commonly known as a "group home."

"Such a situation can be ideal for people that need intense physical or emotional support," says Mary Anderson, ABLE Inc. executive director. "For Hoppy and David, independent living is a much better fit."

Nine of the 26 housing units at The Landing, which was developed by Lutheran Social Services Housing, are reserved for people that receive

supportive services from ABLE. Having the units in close proximity allows the organization to efficiently provide services. And, thanks to the support of North Dakota Housing Finance Agency's Housing Incentive Fund (HIF), the rent is affordable.

"For the people who needed a change in environment, moving from group settings to apartments, the HIF program has been a huge plus," says Anderson. "We could not have improved their quality of housing without the development assistance."

George "Hoppy" Vogel, moved to

Bowman in 1985, the year ABLE opened the group home. Prior to that, Vogel, who is in his 70's, lived in Grafton, ND, at a state-run facility where most of North Dakota's developmentally disabled population was institutionalized before a landmark lawsuit in 1983 declared the practice to be a violation of their civil rights.

Carolynne Jones, director of satellite services for ABLE's Bowman and Hettinger properties, says that Vogel named himself 'Hoppy' after Hopalong Cassidy, a fictional cowboy hero. She believes that action saved his life. "He made a world for himself in order to live in the world he was put into," says Jones. Vogel enjoyed the little bit of freedom that living in the group home setting gave him. When asked if he wanted his own apartment, Jones says he was reluctant to make the change.

"I told Hoppy I'd have to sleep on a cot outside his door the first night because I was so worried," said Jones. "He told me to go, and the next morning he put his arm around me and said he was okay. Whew! When I asked if his new



full-size bed was comfortable, he said sure and told me to quit worrying. Can you imagine your whole adult life in a twin-size bed?"

In his new independent living situation, Vogel is able to stock his own fridge and decide for himself what he wants to eat rather than participating in communal meals. Prior to the move, his medical team wanted him to gain some weight. Since moving into The Landing, Vogel has gained 7 pounds and everyone is pleased with how well he is doing living on his own.

Unlike Vogel, David Hippe longed for independence. He is in his mid-twenties and, like most young adults, he coveted a place of his own without roommates or restrictions on his decorating choices. He also wanted to be able to entertain friends at his home.

"David was rather lost and going down a destructive path in life when he moved to Bowman," said Jones. "He was embarrassed to live in the group home because he so wanted to be on his own yet knew he needed the structure and safety net ABLE provides."

Hippe adapted quickly to independent living. His new apartment is festooned with sports memorabilia from his favorite football team, the Dallas Cowboys. He enjoys inviting company over to watch a movie in the evening or come for coffee in the



morning. His Erickson's Meat Market co-workers are frequent guests.

#### Housing Incentive Fund

The Housing Incentive Fund (HIF) supports the development of affordable multifamily housing units for essential service workers, main street employees and fixed-income households. Approximately one-third of the 31 developments supported by HIF during the 2013-2015 biennium created housing for special needs households including disabled, homeless and elderly individuals and families.

"This move has made a huge difference in people's lives," says Jones. "At first, not having joint gathering spaces – a centralized kitchen or recreation space - was a concern, people pretty much stayed to themselves in their own apartments. After about a month we started to see people, if they wanted company, inviting guests to come into their home. It's on their terms, the way it should

be."

Including HIF, a program that supports the development of affordable multifamily housing, The Landing received more than \$2.4 million from the state of North Dakota to ensure the units occupied by people supported by ABLE are affordable. The remaining 17 units in the complex rent at market rate.

ABLE is dedicated to enhancing relationships, providing opportunities for growth and encouraging people to reach their personal dreams. The organization supports people in their homes, work and communities.

ABLE is currently working with Sullivan Properties in Dickinson, ND, to develop an apartment complex that will offer living arrangements similar to the set-up at The Landing.

(Original article published in Dec. 2014.)