

MORRIS DAILY HERALD

[Print Page](#)

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 4, 2009 Last modified: Friday, January 30, 2009 7:55 PM CST

CIL a resource for disable individuals

EDITOR'S NOTE - This is one in an occasion series of stories written by, and detailing the work of, agencies that benefit from donations to the United Way of Grundy County.

For the thousands of adults, seniors and veterans with disabilities in Grundy County, it is often a daunting challenge to even seek, let alone find, resources that will help enrich their lives and help them become an active part of the community in which they live and work.

In an effort to encourage everyone to "Live United," this feature on the Will-Grundy Center for In-dependent Living, a proud United Way of Grundy County partner agen-cy, summarizes key programs and services for disabled individuals of all types and any age.

Their range of resources and programs are valuable and enlightening throughout the year, especially during the winter months.

It is useful to understand the powerful personal impact these programs have on real people in our communities. One such example follows this summary of program highlights.

If you are a disabled adult fighting "cabin fever," and considering expanding your horizons in 2009, one place worth venturing into, or contacting by phone or website, is the Will-Grundy Center for Independent Living.

If you are the parent of a disabled school-aged student, you'll want to learn more about the upcoming Special Education Confer-ence for Parents being planned for the spring. Meanwhile, CIL staff may be able to help work with families and students as a liaison with teachers and administrators in creating Individualized Educa-tion Plans (IEPs).

There are many ways that the Center is working with Grundy County's adult and senior residents with disabilities. Through a valuable working relationship with the Grundy County Housing Authority, staff members from CIL regularly visit Saratoga Tower residents. Whether offering help with intake procedures for Medicare Part D, signing individuals up for the Circuit Breaker Program, or sharing independent living skills, there is always a great information exchange.

At Narvick House, also in Morris, beginning at the end of February and running through mid-April, the CIL will host its free, eight-week 2009 Legislative In-ternship Series. The staff at the Center for Independent Living - a majority comprised of disabled, qualified professional adults, by the way - will once again team up with local legislators and experts to bring in special guests during this educational program.

This allows the participant to learn directly from those who are currently and actively involved in government to educate, guide, interact with and exchange ideas with those disabled adults for whom advocacy and policy is critical. State Rep. Careen Gordon, Grundy County Clerk Lana Phillips, and Morris Mayor Richard Kopczick will each take a turn serving as "instructors."

The Will-Grundy CIL is also offering a separate 2009 Legislative Internship at its Joliet offices for disabled adults, veterans and seniors. Grundy County residents are encouraged to register for that session, which begins Feb. 26, and will run from 10:30 a.m. to noon weekly through April 16.

The program is free, but registration is required, and can be arranged by calling Mary at (815) 729-0162

(voice) or (815) 729-2085 (TTY).

One individual from the Morris area who will be taking part is someone who has come to know and appreciate the Center for its Community Reintegration Program. This valuable program helps disabled adults who are in nursing homes to regain their independence and live on their own.

Whether it's upon renting an apartment, purchasing a home with the new Home Ownership Program, or moving into any of the Housing Authority's residential options, funding the first month's rent, utilities and food, as well as furniture and support, has proven to be a life-changing experience for hundreds of adults throughout Illinois.

Each has partnered with Centers for Independent Living to reclaim their independence. One such person is Tom, a middle-aged disabled adult who is now renting an apartment in Morris. He was so pleased with his new-found independence and the opportunities it has brought that he shared his sentiments.

Of his experience, and the pride he feels in Grundy County, Tom wrote:

"Grundy County is a great place to call home. The advocacy and support provided by the Will-Grundy Center for Independent Living helped me establish a home here. The Center linked available Grundy County resources, which included healthcare, education and civic issues. Knowing these resources are available, and how to work with them, gives me peace of mind that translates into a sense of belonging to Grundy County. I've found the county to be clean, safe, with friendly residents and a comfortable pace. The goal of independent living and establishing a home has been achieved for me here. High praise and appreciation is due to the both county and the Center."

"Tom is an exemplary model of independent living," according to Debbie Tarrant, an independent living advocate who worked with Tom during his transition.

Mary Tisdale, another CIL staffer, added, "He really was a good advocate who knew what he wanted, took the ball and ran with it, and is thriving in his new setting. He is a very consistent and conscientious person who is always positive and supportive, and I know his participation in the Legislative Internship is going to be a win-win."

Positive case studies like these are a perfect example of how United Way of Grundy County helps people "Live United." For more information about the Will-Grundy Center for Independent Living and its wide range of programs for disabled persons of all types and ages, call, e-mail or visit them at (815) 729-0162 (voice), (815) 729-2085 (TTY); at 2415 West Jefferson Street in Joliet; or on the Web at www.will-grundycil.org.