



Anne Carlsen  
CENTER

Tom Rohleder, ACC Board Chair, cuts the ribbon to officially open the Center's Community Services Office in Grand Forks.

# Reaching Out With Help & Hope



The Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors extend a cheerful welcome to the Anne Carlsen Center.

ACC holds grand opening ceremony for Community Services Office in Grand Forks

The nearly 70-year-old Anne Carlsen Center (ACC), based in Jamestown, N.D., has marked its share of milestones over the years. On August 19, the Center enjoyed one of its proudest history-making moments—the grand opening in Grand Forks of its first-ever Community Services Office.

For an organization dedicated to nurturing abilities and changing lives, this was a chance to make an impact on more North Dakotans than ever before.

Applause filled the air as the ceremonious cutting of a large, shiny blue ribbon added a special touch to what Grand Forks Mayor Michael Brown called “a great day...an exciting day for Grand Forks.” Among the many cheering ACC’s expansion of services were parents of children with developmental disabilities.

Bob Hoffert of Grand Forks says his family has already benefited from the expert advice and caring support provided by the Anne Carlsen Center. Hoffert’s 12-year-old son, Eric, was diagnosed with autism eight years ago. This past spring, staff from the Anne Carlsen Center provided an in-depth evaluation followed by a detailed support plan for Eric’s needs.

“Like others with autism, Eric has a lot of hypersensitivity to sound, touch, people and crowds,” says Hoffert. “The Center offered ways to help him become more comfortable with these sensory experiences and improve his connections with the world around him.”

### **Building Full, Healthy Lives**

Individuals and families affected by autism, behavioral disorders, and fragile medical conditions can go to the Community Services Office in Grand Forks to access helpful information and resources. These locations are not residential, as the goal is to help each person thrive in his or her home and community.

ACC provides expert advice and training in people’s homes, helping children, young adults, and their families stay together and build lives of dignity.

The Center supports individuals over the age of 21, helping each person create a unique plan for independence and community involvement. Individuals learn important skills such as basic cooking, personal care, choice making and personal safety.

“Anne Carlsen Center is dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities enjoy healthy and full lives,” Rhonda Eppelsheimer, ACC’s Family Resource Director, told the crowd gathered for the grand-opening celebration.

The office opened in June, and there are currently eight people on staff. As word has quickly spread about the meaningful, community-based services the Center provides, the Grand Forks office is getting a lot of visits and phone calls.

“One father asked ‘How soon can you start?’” says Eppelsheimer. “There’s been a lot of interest. The phones have been ringing off the hook.”

**For more information about ACC's Community Services in Grand Forks, call 1-888-815-3770.**



Bob Hoffert shares his experiences as the father of a child with autism. The Grand Forks man says the Anne Carlsen Center helped 12-year-old Eric improve his interaction with the world around him.

### **Promising Partnerships**

“For over 25 years, I’ve worked with children and families,” says Dr. Sue Offutt, ACC Board member and assistant professor in the Early Childhood Department at University of North Dakota. “So, as an educator and a resident of this region, I know that the addition of the Anne Carlsen Center Community Services Office is vital to Grand Forks and its surrounding communities.”

ACC will be collaborating with other entities in the region to provide the best services possible to families. Discussions have already taken place with UND’s occupational therapy and special education departments and will continue with other departments such as social work, physical therapy, communication science disorders, nursing and medicine.

While the Center expands its services, it continues to maintain its well-established campus in Jamestown. For nearly 70 years, families have brought their children to Jamestown to learn and grow. Today, in some cases, that is still the best choice.

In situations where individuals can continue to live in their own homes and communities, the Anne Carlsen Center will be there, offering its compassion and expertise. The Center will open Community Services Offices in the state’s other larger communities over the next few years.

“We are eager to see what the future holds for us,” says Tom Rohleder, ACC Board Chair.

And the future has begun to look a lot more hopeful for families like the Hofferts who know that sometimes you need a partner in life to help enjoy the fullness of it.