

# EMPOWERING & SUP

## ACC brings expertise, compassion to communities across ND

**A**nne Carlsen Center (ACC) has a rich legacy of nurturing children and young adults with a wide array of disabilities. Since 1941 the Center has demonstrated the expertise and the passion for helping others enjoy the best possible quality of life.

While meeting diverse and important needs on our Jamestown campus, we have become increasingly aware of significant needs outside of the ACC campus.

Research conducted by North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities (NDCPD) concluded that there is a shortage of services, personnel and training in the state for those dealing with medical and behavioral challenges. We believe that ACC is uniquely qualified to fill this gap and drive the quality of disability services in North Dakota higher.

### Providing Easy Access

The Anne Carlsen Center opened an outreach office in Grand Forks in June and has already begun serving families in that community. Over the next three years, the Center will establish a presence in other major communities in the state.

“We want our resources and professionals to be within easy reach for families of individuals with high degrees of autism, severe behavioral challenges, or medical fragility,” says CEO Dan Howell. “Families will travel shorter distances to receive the help they need.”

These outreach locations will not offer residential services. They will, however, offer a variety of supports and services that will make it possible for more children to continue living in their natural family environment.

### Keeping Families Together

“Many families who want to keep their child in their home have a difficult time doing so,” says Rhonda Epplesheimer, ACC’s Family Resource Director. “They are asking for support and training.

We can help keep these families together by bringing our expertise to individuals where they are.”

By offering support in the areas of daily living, self-care and behavior management, ACC makes it easier to build a home life of dignity and well-being. In both urban and rural settings, the Center is meeting multiple needs of families and providing practical help.

### Providing Meaningful Activities

“As children grow, their needs will change, and we are equipped to meet those needs,” explains Howell. “We believe young adults should have more opportunities to live a full life as an integral member within a community.”

The Anne Carlsen Center provides meaningful and individualized activities, helping those with disabilities develop the skills and connections needed to become vital participants in their communities. We offer training and support in areas such as: money management, shopping, appointments, transportation, spirituality, recreation, job options and volunteer opportunities.

### Exceptional Medical Care

There are not a lot of residential options for some of our students once they graduate from the Center. In the past, many of those with complex medical needs have moved from ACC to a nursing home.

As part of our expansion, the Anne Carlsen Center is now allowing students who are considered medically fragile to continue living on our Jamestown campus after they graduate. This year, one of our 2008 graduates is remaining on campus and will continue to benefit from our exceptional medical care and comfortable, home-like atmosphere.

### State-of-the-Art Training

ACC has become aware of a pressing need for more training in Autism Spectrum Disorders, severe behavioral challenges, and the needs of the medically fragile. The Center is committed to providing a variety of in-depth training opportunities for families and professionals.

# PORTING FAMILIES

We are hosting a series of major conferences focusing on Autism Spectrum Disorders. Renowned autism experts from across the country have been invited by ACC to share the latest research and treatment strategies.

## Our Jamestown Campus

While the Anne Carlsen Center expands, we recognize the importance of our campus in Jamestown. Over the years, many children with disabilities have lived life to its fullest here, benefitting from our exceptional residential, therapeutic and educational services. For some students, this will continue to be the best fit for their needs and abilities.

“We look forward to seeing many more children blossom in the safe, secure and loving atmosphere the campus provides,” says Marcia Gums, ACC’s Chief Operating Officer.

## The Journey Ahead

This expansion of ACC services will provide families across North Dakota with more choices. They will have additional resources available to them, as they search for help and hope.

“We recognize that each person has different needs and dreams for the future,” says Howell. “The Anne Carlsen Center has the depth of expertise and compassion to be a partner in life for so many. It is an honor to continue Dr. Anne Carlsen’s work, as we remain dedicated to nurturing abilities and changing lives.”



## Hope at Last

ACC’s new outreach programs help family through troubled times

When it comes to play time, Jaxon and Jaleigh both go for books and puzzles. Here Jennifer helps Jaleigh with reading, while Dusty and Jaxon talk about how to put a puzzle together.

**J**axon and Jaleigh Schneider could be any other set of twins. They laugh, they cry, they scramble for toys, and capture your heart with their soft blue eyes.

But they are also miracles in their own way. Seeing them smile, move around their house, climb on their parents—all those everyday activities are hope fulfilled.

You see, 18 months ago, Jaxon and Jaleigh began their lives nine and a half weeks earlier than expected.

With the early start on life, came a series of medical emergencies. For a family excited for pregnancy and birth, there was also a fear that one or both of the children would not live past their original due date.

“You find out you are pregnant and you are so excited,” recalled Jennifer. “You bring home a perfect baby and life goes on.”

No one could have expected what the next year would bring.

## Early Troubles

Confined to incubators and fed oxygen through respirators from birth, both babies suffered brain bleeds when they were one week old.

Premature babies are at an increased risk for brain bleeds, and the earlier a baby is born can often determine the severity of that bleed. Normally, premature babies have a grade I or II. Jaxon and Jaleigh suffered Grade III bleeds, identified by ventricles becoming enlarged by blood and often leaving a child with long-term brain injuries.

The babies were born at a hospital in Fargo, forcing the Jamestown couple to relocate temporarily with family in order to stay close to their children.

Dusty, who works in Valley City, made the 60-mile drive each morning and evening exhausted, but knowing the family depended on his income. Often fighting the temptation of sleep while on Interstate, Dusty felt guilty that he was abandoning his wife with the family’s problems. Both parents were finding hope to be, at times, a fleeting emotion. But the family found strength in each other.

“I’m not going to say it’s been easy on anybody,” said Jennifer. “It is exhausting. But you really learn to rely on each other, too.”

The medical emergencies continued to pile up. In September, Jaleigh needed surgery when the skull plates in her head had closed too soon. In October, Jaxon was

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