

Christy Potts grew up on a farm north of Bismarck. With her roots growing deep in the heartland of North Dakota, she found an even deeper love of working with adults with disabilities after it was modeled for her by her family. Christy has two uncles with developmental disabilities “Time, respect, advocacy, and a high level of care was demonstrated for me by my family, especially by my grandparents who were their biggest champions.” Her personal experience translates into the way Christy advocates for care and respect at the LISTEN Center. When designing the new center on South Washington Street in Grand Forks, every aspect was designed for people with disabilities in mind. The hallways, desks, tables, and bathrooms were designed to help the staff provide the best care for everyone who visits the LISTEN Center.

‘When we support all people to have a better quality of life, that ripples up to the rest of us and we see it in our communities, in our workplaces, and in our lives.’

Christy Potts

# LISTEN UP!

A Conversation with  
Christy Potts, Executive  
Director of the LISTEN  
Center

Questions by Chloe Piekkola



## You have just recently opened a new facility; how does this center differ from previous locations?

Our previous spaces were not accessible or safe for people with disabilities and our staff. The old Drop-In Community Center on North Washington Street was old and outdated. LISTEN had owned that property since 1984, but it's a split-level building and wasn't accessible for people with limited mobility. We had many people in our community who loved coming to Drop-In, and many who would have to miss out because they had limited mobility. There were so many opportunities to improve the quality of services and spaces for people with disabilities in our new building, that we all worked hard to make it accessible and user-friendly for everyone who chooses our services and everyone who chooses to work for us. We have a dining room now, and we have an actual elevator. We designed the building with wider doorways and hallways, lots of natural light, and automatic door openers throughout. We also installed ceiling lifts and hydraulic changing tables in 9 of the bathrooms in the building. We can now support many more people in this building because of the accessibility and wide-open spaces.



## What kinds of services does the LISTEN Center offer for adults who live with disabilities?

Everyone who comes to LISTEN during the day decides what they want their schedule to look like and what activities they would like to participate in. Some of which include music therapy, arts and crafts, pet therapy, volunteering for Meals on Wheels, working out at Choice Fitness, movies, cooking classes, exercise classes, and sometimes just taking a quiet moment in one of our sensory rooms. We support people with everything and anything you could think of that would affect someone's daily life. Giving our direct support staff the freedom and authority to look for ways to improve people's lives has helped us provide great quality-of-life care for everyone who chooses LISTEN as their residential provider. We can support someone at their family home with these services to provide some relief or a break for their loved ones, or we can support someone at community events or activities during these hours. Our Drop-In Community Center is open to all and provides many low or no-cost activities and events for the community.







## What does LISTEN stand for? More importantly, what does LISTEN mean to you?

LISTEN stands for Love Is Sharing The Exceptional Needs. For me, this company means growth, progress, advocacy, and raising the standard for accessible and quality spaces and services for people with disabilities. Professionally for myself, LISTEN has given me a great avenue to show my leadership skills and business knowledge. I've had the opportunity to improve so many policies, practices, and procedures at LISTEN that I wouldn't have had at a larger organization. I really do feel a lot of pride and ownership in our new building and the growth of LISTEN since I started.

## What are some goals the LISTEN Center has for future years?

Our most important goal is to respect, value, and appreciate everyone who chooses LISTEN's services and everyone who chooses to work for us. Some of LISTEN's future goals include expanding residential services with high-quality accessible housing options for people with disabilities. It's very difficult to find truly accessible affordable housing. So, we want to build partnerships in the community and work to design spaces that are more accessible and user-friendly for people with disabilities.





In what ways can people in the community help the LISTEN Center?  
Are there volunteer opportunities?  
Or somewhere they can go to donate?

LISTEN is very fortunate to have gaming dollars to offset expenses. Without gaming, LISTEN wouldn't be able to support so many people with disabilities and we certainly wouldn't be able to help individuals and families in dire need of services. We will always be thankful for donations, and you can certainly do that on our website [www.listencenter.org](http://www.listencenter.org), but the need right now is not for us, it is for all citizens with disabilities in the state because LISTEN can't support everyone. The best way to help right now is to contact your legislators and encourage them to provide funding for the DD Budget. The Health and Human service funding supports the most vulnerable of us, the most disadvantaged of us, the most underprivileged of us. And when we support all people to have a better quality of life, that ripples up to the rest of us and we see it in our communities, in our workplaces, and in our lives. **G**

**LOOKING TO HELP?**

Volunteers are always welcome at LISTEN, if you would like to volunteer with awe-inspiring people you can call their main line at 701-746-7840.

Or you can visit their website at [listencenter.org](http://listencenter.org).



Provides consultations

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**Contact Ruth for your home consultation!**

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