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Thirty years ago this month an intrepid band of individuals decided to incorporate an idea into an organization. Up to this time, Project Freedom was a dream, a concept, and a loose collection of people concerned about housing.

Those three elements were “hosted” by the Nottingham Recreation Center for the Physically Limited (NRCPL). The “dream” of Project Freedom had been around for about three years, and NRCPL’s board of directors took on the dream as a goal. During this period, people with and without disabilities began to come together around the concept of people with disabilities living independently with supports in the community.

It had become apparent the year before that bringing the dream of Project Freedom into reality would literally require building it from the ground up--an effort that would eventually take six more years. As 1984 moved into the month of March, however, it was decided that such an undertaking should be done through a separate organization.

Project Freedom Inc. was founded 30 years ago this month, and nobody would have dreamed back then of the impact that the organization would have in the next three decades. In fact, much of Project Freedom’s impact may never be known because the catalysts for positive changes are seldom documented or forthrightly acknowledged.

Along with the incorporation in March of 1984 came the founding membership that formed to support the fledgling organization. I found the roll of founding members after the “Flood of ‘07” flooded my office. I’m listing those good people below with pride and gratitude because they believed in my dream of independence and freedom. Many have left us; many more are still active strong supporters of Project Freedom.

As we celebrate our 30th year of breaking new ground for people with disabilities, please consider becoming a member of Project Freedom to continue the legacy started by these founding members. Thank you.

Norman A. Smith, Associate Executive Director -