


Connecting the Dots



Do you ever find yourself thinking how strange life can be? Or how a current event can help you make sense of something that happened years ago? Or how and why paths cross in the way they do? Sometimes it takes years for a person to connect all the dots.

I have a clear understanding of how our services impact the individuals we serve. However, I am humbled to admit that it wasn't until a recent event that I realized the total magnitude of the role CCRI plays in the lives of their families.

A couple of years ago, our Board of Directors was discussing our annual budget. A member of the Board, who is a parent of a person served by CCRI, explained that he joined the Board to ensure that CCRI was a stable organization.

He went on to explain, that unless you have a child with a disability, it's hard to understand the importance organizations like CCRI play in a parent's life. A parent's worst fear can be that there will be no one to care for their child. I was taken aback by his comment. He sensed my surprise and explained that parents are looking for a lifelong commitment. They want to be assured that their child will live a full and productive life in their absence. This

conversation allowed me to connect a few more dots. The discussion led me to remember a conversation I had years prior with a mother facing this exact situation.

Twenty eight years ago we began serving Stephanie Adams. She was 31 when she moved into one of our homes and Stephanie was an only child. Her father had passed away and her mother, Anita, was aging. Moving Stephanie was a difficult decision for Anita to make. She shared that she was riddled with guilt, fear and apprehension about her daughter's future. But Anita's feeling of guilt were lifted when she recognized Stephanie left one family and gained another. The bond that Stephanie shared with her roommates and caregivers quickly grew and became very strong.

I still remember the first time I met Stephanie, in 1988. She was so full of life, had a gentle spirit and a memory like a steel trap!!! I introduced myself and she asked me a barrage of questions about my family. From that point on, she had my



life history and that of every other person she met firmly ingrained in her memory. She would greet me every time she saw me with, "Hi, Rhonda. You're married to Jeff. Your sister is Shelly, your Mom's name is Millie and your pets names are..." followed by a gentle touch and a long gaze at my face. I wish I had half of her ability to remember names. Even when our paths crossed less frequently, she never wavered from this greeting, until she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

When Stephanie's mother became terminally ill, she asked me and Stephanie's new guardian to promise her that Stephanie would always be able to stay with her CCRI family. It was important that Anita die knowing Stephanie would live with her CCRI family the rest of her life. You see, Stephanie, like many of the people we serve, had no other immediate relatives to watch over her once her parents died. Anita was counting on the fact that we would continue to care for Stephanie in the home Anita had grown to appreciate so much. I believe, this wish allowed Anita to die at peace.

Chris Fester, one of Stephanie's long-term caregivers and life-long friend introduced Stephanie to fishing. She loved to fish whether it was on a dock, in a boat or on the ice. She had the same technique no matter the location. She would put her line in the water and chant, "Here, fishy fishy. Here, fishy fishy." Until she got one!! One time Stephanie and Chris were accompanied on



one of their fishing trips by a reporter from the Fargo Forum. It was clear from the resulting story, that the reporter got a kick out of Stephanie's technique.

Stephanie's luggage was well traveled. She went to Las Vegas with a group of friends, horseback riding in Iowa with her roommates, and made numerous trips to Camp H.E.R.O., the Mall of America, Twins and Vikings games and Valley Fair.

Stephanie used to love her yearly adventures at CCRI's Camp H.E.R.O. One year, the Camp Director felt sure that Stephanie and her roommates would probably enjoy getting away from one another. In the Camp Director's mind, the individuals lived together, traveled together, and almost everything in between so she thought they might want to stay in different cabins with the idea that it would be beneficial for them to develop other friendships. They quickly showed the Camp Director they wanted no part of that! With seventy other campers, they still managed to join each other at every meal, participate in the same activities and always end up on the same pontoon ride! It was obvious that the bonds of their friendship were deep.

The last time Stephanie attended camp H.E.R.O., she was starting to fail due to having Alzheimer's. Prior to this, Stephanie was very independent, but now needed help with many things. Once again the bond between Stephanie and her long time roommates was obvious. Despite the fact that there were capable employees to care for Stephanie, her roommates watched out for her constantly. Reminding the employees when Stephanie's meds were due, what kind of food she liked, what activities she liked to do, not to leave her

unsupervised and so on. Their bonds were those of a family. And just like any other family, when one of the members needs help, the others are there for them.

As Stephanie's Alzheimer's Disease progressed, it became difficult for her to manage the stairs in her current home where she had lived the last 27 years. As her team discussed her options, there was talk about CCRI's ability to provide her with the specialized care she would need. Could she stay in her home or have to go to a nursing home? It was important for CCRI to honor the promise made to her mother 15 years prior and keep Stephanie with her CCRI family. CCRI worked with Clay County Social Services to develop a plan that would meet Stephanie's needs along with those

of her roommates. The CCRI Board of Director's was asked to purchase an accessible house. They approved the purchase without hesitation.

CCRI acquired a rambler-style house and remodeled it to be completely handicap-accessible for Stephanie, as well as her aging roommates. They moved in April of 2007.



On March 24, 2008, Stephanie lost her fight with Alzheimer's. She died like we would wish for any of our own family members, at home, surrounded by people who cared for her deeply and knew her well. It took the support of our Board, her caregivers, our nurses, her guardian, her county case manager and Hospice to provide her with the necessary care till the end. Stephanie lived the life her mother wished for and in the end died with

dignity surrounded by her family.

Her favorite hobby was scrap booking. Her scrapbooks were displayed at her memorial service. The pictures were those of a rich and rewarding life.

After 20 years, thanks to a conversation with a board member, a wish from a dying mother and a 28 year partnership with Stephanie, I have finally connected all the dots. CCRI will meet and exceed the dreams that parents have for their children at every stage of their life by making a lifelong commitment to those we serve.

Written by Rhonda King, Executive Director

Memorials Received in Memory of

Stephanie Adams

Rhonda King
Jody Hudson
Matt & Zona Mathison
Shelly Hakanson
Anonymous
Amy, Barb and Jenny Rheault

Delores Klug

Wendy Slattery and Gail Klug

** Upcoming Event **

CCRI's
3rd Annual Walk for
Disability Awareness
September 2008

More info to follow

Experiencing Life's Possibilities

Talent Show

This entertaining evening provides an opportunity for creative expression for many of the people we serve. It was incredible to see people of all abilities working alongside each other to deliver an amazing show!



Brad belts out a heartfelt song with passion.

The acts were varied from an inspiring comedic routine that caused the audience to laugh uncontrollably to a heartfelt song dedicated to a woman's mother.

The performers were phenomenal and the support they received from their caregivers was inspiring. The

enthusiasm and commitment of all our team members made the night a huge success. It was delightful to watch.

Day Camp

The camp provides hands-on activities centered in the community. We've taken individuals to visit a rural farm where they made homemade jam from start to finish, fed the horses apples and carrots, played with a new colt and were thrilled with a hayride.

Another day we visited a lake resort and fished, swam, went boating and roasted marshmallows around the campfire. Our goal is to have fun, make new friends and spend the day in a new and enriching activity.

Camp H.E.R.O.

Camp H.E.R.O. is held at Courage North located on the shores of beautiful Lake George near Park Rapids MN. It is a place that parents/ guardians can feel confident that all of the needs of their loved ones will be addressed.

Camp H.E.R.O. is unique in the fact that we bring our own team members and medical staff to ensure a safe and pleasurable camping experience. The cost of providing this personalized staffing is expensive. Campers pay a small fee to attend because the vast majority of expenses are paid through donations from corporations, grants, individual donors and service clubs.

Camp H.E.R.O. is a place full of new experiences. Numerous activities are learned, stereotypes are broken, and memories for many, last a lifetime.



Justin and Allen out on the water at Lake George.

The camp experience supports and enhances the physical, emotional and social growth for the people we serve. For many, camp is the stepping stone to other recreational activities.

Dreams, Creativity & Fun

Softball

Another great opportunity is the Red River Adaptive Softball League. CCRI welcomes anyone with a disability in the FM area to join. Last year we had over 100 participants. We invite everyone to come and watch the games at Centennial Field on Sunday evenings over the course of the summer.

One family shared with us recently how important softball is in their son's life. They return from their weekend at the lakes early each Sunday so that they can watch his games. They enjoy all of the players so much.



Doug at a tour of the NDSU milking parlor.

Adventure Thursdays

One of the most popular activities is Adventure Thursdays. The goal of Adventure Thursday is to create new and interesting experiences that will broaden horizons, uncover a hidden talent, or create a new and exciting hobby. Activities are limitless.

One week we may make a unique crafts, take a business tour, or take a field trip to a park. We have even milked cows!

The ideas for activities come directly from the people we serve, their family and our team members. We find out what people are interested in and try to accommodate those interests by organizing events they will enjoy.

Unique Trips

Something that we are really proud of at CCRI is that we are able to help make dreams a reality. A few of these dreams include trips to unique destinations. We have traveled to Hawaii, Branson, Las Vegas and Mexico just to name a few. These trips are life changing for the people we serve and their caregivers.

Imagine being able to watch someone see the ocean for the first time! Remember your first airplane ride or eating outdoors underneath a picturesque sunset? Some of these experiences are new to our travelers. In the fall we have several trips planned. These trips will enhance and enrich the lives of the people we serve. Trips this year include Nashville, TN; Medora, ND; and Fort Worth, TX for a NASCAR race.

The generosity of our donors has enabled CCRI to support our mission so we may improve the lives of people with disabilities in our community every day. We are grateful for our donors' compassion and support.



Buck entertains with a classic tune from artist, Johnny Cash.

To make a donation to CCRI and help make a difference in the lives of those we are privileged to serve, please contact Jody Hudson at 218-331-2024.



PRST STD
 U.S. Postage Paid
 Non Profit Org
 Permit #556
 Moorhead, MN

The mission of CCRI is to enhance and enrich the lives and learning of people with disabilities.

The vision of CCRI is to provide an environment where people of all abilities may experience life's possibilities.

CCRI LEADERSHIP TEAM

CCRI Board of Directors

Jim Danielson - *President*
 Julie Herman - *Vice President*
 Barb Matthees - *Secretary*
 Tom Holtgrewe - *Treasurer*
 Sharon Grugel Michael Olsen Catie Herman
 Deb Kukowski Hal Wentzel Dave Lysne
 Roger Erickson Harriette McCaul

CCRI Sr. Leadership

Rhonda King, Executive Director	19 Years
Lynette Weber, Options Director	16 Years
Shannon Bock, Director of Programs	13 Years
Sue Lopez, SLS Director	11 Years
Carolyn Cossette, Medical Services	10 Years
Jody Hudson, Development Director	9 years
Mark McGuigan, Business Manager	7 years
Carmel Froemke, ARMHS Director	4 years
Andrea Ryan, HR Director	2 years

Tom Holtgrewe Appointed to Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities

Tom Holtgrewe, a CCRI Board Member, and parent of a child with a disability, applied for and has been appointed by Governor Tim Pawlenty as a Parent Member on the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Holtgrewe's term is from 03/23/08 to 01/04/10. Tom has been appointed to the Grant Review Committee. The council is made up of 21 members appointed by the Governor.

The mission of the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities is to provide information, education, and training to build knowledge, develop skills, and change attitudes that will lead to increased independence, productivity, self determination, integration and inclusion for people with developmental disabilities and their families.