

## *Wishes Do Come True*

*Gary's mother's dream came true when she saw her son living a life that was so much more than what the doctors ever lead her to believe possible.*



*Perched on the left is Gary, with his younger brothers  
- photo dated April, 1959.*

In February 1977, CCRI, Inc. literally opened its doors for business with a beautiful new home in Hawley. There were eight people waiting to move in and call this house their home. Over the last 31 years we have seen many changes in funding, certifications, house mates, renovations, etc., but one thing remained constant at the house - Gary Hermanson.

I had the pleasure of visiting Gary and his long-term caregiver of 19 years, Renae. As I sat on the couch and looked around I noticed several pictures of Gary and his roommates enjoying life over the course of many years. They all had the same thing in common...beautiful smiles. These were pictures of people truly enjoying life.

Gary's life, however, was not always filled with smiles. According to his brother Mike, "His future didn't look so bright in the beginning." Gary was born with Down Syndrome in 1953 in Minneapolis and was the oldest of 5 children. At that time, Gary's mother was told by doctors that her son would not live long, because of his disability and warned, "Don't get too attached to Gary." The doctor recommended putting Gary in a state run hospital. Gary became a ward of the state when he was 2 months old, although he remained living with his family until he moved to the Fairbault State Hospital when he was six years old.

Gary's brother, Mike, described the State Hospital as "Horrible." As Mike shared his memories it was obvious from the change in his voice, the place left him with unpleasant and vivid memories. His family found it painful to visit Gary (although they visited as often as they could), because every visit meant saying goodbye to Gary. Gary's mother regretted that decision for the rest of her life - which was obvious, when she spoke to Renae about this with tears in her eyes.

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*Wishes, continued from page 1*

When Gary turned seven, he moved to the Brainerd State Hospital. This move allowed him to be closer to home as well as receive better care. He lived in Brainerd for 17 years. The circumstances at state hospitals and other institutions eventually spurred law suits which caused the federal government to initiate funding for community options, such as CCRI.

In 1977, Gary turned 24 years old and moved out of the institution into the home he still lives in - a home owned by CCRI.

During our visit, Gary's professional caregiver, Renae, said she had known Gary for many years prior to working with him. Renae served on CCRI's first Board of Directors, as a community representative because she had lived in Hawley for many years. At that time, most of the other Board Members were parents of people who had a child with a disability. The initial vision for CCRI was to build a home where people with disabilities could live in a supportive environment. The Hawley home made that dream a reality. In addition, this home would provide parents with peace of mind that their son or daughter would be well taken care of long after moving out of their parent's homes.

*Renae stated, "These were exciting times. Nothing else like CCRI existed in Clay County. We were like pioneers."*

Gary's mother moved to Arkansas and she considered having Gary move with her but found no services like CCRI existed in Arkansas at the time. When asked if Gary's mother worried about Gary living so far away, Mike's response was a great compliment to CCRI. "Mother never worried about him living so far away, she only missed him."

In earlier conversations, she told Gary's caregivers, "I'd have liked Gary to be closer to me but he is where he needs to be...his home. You are so good to him, he is safe and well cared for."

The majority of Gary's caregivers have worked with him since the late 80's and early 90's. Mike offered another compliment to CCRI when he was able to refer to Gary's caregivers by name. This is really something to be proud of as this industry usually has high employment turnover. Mike talked at length about how Gary's caregivers have worked hard to create a home with a family-like atmosphere.

When Gary's mother became too fragile to travel, Mike and Gary flew to Arkansas to visit her. Gary was terrified. This would be Gary's first and last time riding on an airplane. Upon his return, Gary's caregivers thought it was sad that he wouldn't have an opportunity to see his mother again. His CCRI caregivers rallied and began planning and before long, they were in a van headed to Arkansas. Because of their commitment, Gary was able to visit her three more times before she passed away.



*Gary, with his big & bright smile.*

When asked about Gary's trips to visit his mother, Mike expressed his gratitude with great emotion. Renae had much the same response when sharing that she will always remember those visits as some of her most humbling moments as a caregiver. During their trips, Gary's mother treated them just like family. Renae felt that this was the most significant compliment she and her co-workers could ever receive about their work as professional caregivers.

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### *Wishes, continued from page 2*

Gary's mother died about a year after the last visit. Renae talked about how good it felt for all his caregivers to know that Gary was able to see his mother over the years and to be a part of helping him maintain such an important relationship.

As Gary has aged, like many of us, he has become less active. Today, he relies on a walker and a wheelchair. The loss of mobility has not stopped him from leading an active and full life. To accommodate his changing needs CCRI modified his home so everything was accessible for him. In addition, CCRI purchased an accessible van with a lift so Gary could continue being active in the community.\* Gary's family expressed their immense gratitude to CCRI for accommodating Gary's changing needs.



*Gary & Renae sharing a fun moment while at Camp H.E.R.O..*

Because of forward thinking parents, over 30 years ago, CCRI has been able to make an impact in the lives of many people with disabilities in our community.

*Gary's mother's dream came true when she saw her son living a life that was so much more than the doctors ever lead her to believe possible.*

*Written by Rhonda King, Executive Director*

*\* Modifications to homes and vans are funded by CCRI, the county and our generous donors.*

## *Walk & Roll-a-thon for Disability Awareness Results*

On behalf of the hundreds of people we serve, we would like to extend our sincere thanks for the generous support of our Walk and Roll-a-thon for Disability Awareness. On September 20<sup>th</sup> more than 185 people from the community participated. This amazing group of individuals raised \$15,000 which will be used to impact the lives of those we serve.

A very special thanks goes to the following sponsors for their support:



*Pam's pizza party she won because she raised over \$500 in pledges.*

Bremer Bank, Christensen Group, Clay County Thrivent, Dawson Insurance, FRS Industries, Hannaher's, Hornbacher's, Janine Paulson/Coldwell Banker, John Arneson Agency, Medical Pharmacy, Michael J. Olsen Communications, Paragon Development, Reardon Office Equipment, State Bank, Sunmart & Zimmerman Investments.

We would also like to thank Pam Grugel, a person served in our SLS program, for her fundraising efforts. Pam raised well-over \$500 in pledges. Her hard work and tenacity is greatly appreciated, respected and will ensure she and her friends continue to benefit from the many activities funded by this event. Thanks Pam!

## *Minnesota Social Services Budget for 2009*

As we approach this Holiday season, there is much uncertainty in the air for Americans. Our nation is in a financial crisis unlike current generations have experienced. I want to give you assurance that CCRI is doing well today and is taking steps to ensure continued financial viability well into the future. My intent for sharing this information is to respond to any worries you may be having about how CCRI will be impacted by the economy. I want to help you understand changes you may see in the future.



*Brad visits with State Senator Keith Langseth*

As a result of our solid financial practices, large size and committed and enthusiastic team we can make the adjustments necessary to weather this storm. Rest assured this is not an easy time for any company; however, CCRI has a management team that will help us clear the foreseeable "sharp turns" in the months ahead. CCRI's Board of Directors and I are trying to prepare CCRI for the long haul that is ahead of us. Hence, you will see us making changes in the way we conduct business. Our goal is to be proactive rather than taking a wait and see stance.

Some may be wondering why we need to make changes when our local economy has been rather insulated to date. I would like to take this opportunity to explain the funding system we operate within and how we expect to be impacted. The money we receive for providing services is Medicaid dollars. For every dollar the State of MN spends they receive a dollar from the federal government. Both state and federal funding is completely funded by tax dollars. With the recent massive upheaval in corporate America, social services funding is likely to be reduced both in 2009 and 2010. Job loss and failing corporations will ultimately result in less tax dollars collected. Thus, CCRI needs to plan accordingly for this reduction to ensure that we continue to be a strong service provider and employer.

To help plan for our future, we can look back at recent history to see how we were impacted in times that weren't nearly as challenging for our government and state. In 2002, disability services got a 1% rate cut to all services from the MN legislature. Hence, our reimbursement for that year was cut by 1%. At that time, the State of MN had a \$4B deficit, but they also had some bright spots. They had \$1B in reserves, millions of dollars in tobacco money coming into the state from lawsuits and jobs were growing; therefore, the state could count on an increase in tax revenue in 2003.

Today, the state is predicting a \$4B plus deficit. The surplus is down to a few hundred million, the tobacco money is gone and we can plan on tax revenue decreasing in 2009 and 2010. In 2002, parents, advocates, employers and employees for people with disabilities lobbied the legislature and were successful when we only received a 1% decrease. Our voices mattered. As we forge ahead it is a necessity that our voices be heard again.

*Minnesota Budget, continued on page 5*

### *MN Social Services Budget, continued from page 4*

This is not the time to be complacent as our services can be cut. Compounding the issues is the fact that the Governor has already told every department within state government to decrease spending by 5% with the exception of the Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS has been told to plan for a 10% reduction in spending. DHS is responsible for authorizing the state's Medicaid funding (our services). This is a complicated and precarious time for our industry. In January, the first draft of the Governor's budget will be publicized. Let your voice be heard.

Over the past 15 years, CCRI has enjoyed steady growth which has funded our consistent attention to creating good jobs and providing great services. Year after year with funds from growth, we have expanded services to meet the needs of new people entering the system and the ever changing needs of our aging clients. Hence, when CCRI received a 1% rate reduction in 2003 we didn't really see the impact, because that loss was covered by our constant expansion.

The good news is that this past growth has positioned us well financially. However, as one might expect, government officials are telling us to be prepared for very minimal growth if any over the next few years. That, compounded with possible rate cuts, will have a much more negative impact than the situation in 2003. The harsh reality is that, we can't count on funding levels to remain the same. Hence CCRI will be making the necessary changes to position ourselves to weather the storm...whatever it brings. The difficult thing is we don't know what the "storm" will bring.

We all need to share ideas for savings, increase our donor base as fundraising and donations will become a very important component of services, participate in the legislative process and most importantly - keep a positive attitude and continue to provide outstanding care to those we are privileged to serve. Please be assured that CCRI has everyone's best interests at heart with the changes that are being made.

Mark your calendars for February 12, 2009. Our industry will be hosting a rally at the Capitol and we would like to see as many employees, family members and people we serve attend as possible. If we aren't heard, we won't be successful in maintaining the level of services those we serve deserve.

*Written by Rhonda King, Executive Director*



*The rally at the MN State Capitol last year.*

## *Your Voice Matters*

During the economic changes we'll be facing together, we will need to keep communicating – and the best thing you can do to help is communicate with Representatives, Senators and the Governor in one or more ways:

*Communicate by email, a short note, a letter or phone call.*

### **Governor Tim Pawlenty**

130 State Capitol

St. Paul, MN 55155

Phone: 651-296-3391 or 1-800-657-3717

email: [tim.pawlenty@state.mn.us](mailto:tim.pawlenty@state.mn.us)

### **Senator Keith Langseth**

122 State Capitol Building

St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

Phone: 651-296-3205

email: [sen.keith.langseth@senate.mn](mailto:sen.keith.langseth@senate.mn)

### **Rep. Morrie Lanning**

259 State Office Building

St. Paul, MN 55155

Phone: 651-296- 5515 or 1-800-657-3742

email: [rep.morrie.lanning@house.mn](mailto:rep.morrie.lanning@house.mn)

### **Rep. Paul Marquart**

597 State Office Building

St. Paul, MN 55155

Phone: 651-296-6829 or 1-800-551-5520

email: [rep.paul.marquart@house.mn](mailto:rep.paul.marquart@house.mn)

## *Tips for Communicating in Your Own Words*

- Tell them who you are and how you're involved and support people with disabilities.
- Legislators are just plain people. Like all of us, they want to have a nice day. Be pleasant. Say something NICE.
- Talk from the heart and personalize your message as much as possible. A client or family member is often your most effective tool.
- Keep your comments short and to the point.
- Remember five letters from different people make an issue. It doesn't take all that much to get a legislator to notice a constituent concern and that people with disabilities will suffer.
- And lastly, remember to say thank you.

## *Client Appreciation Turkey Dinner*

On November 17th, at our Client Appreciation Turkey Dinner event, we served just over 400 people in less than two hours. All of the food was prepared by CCRI, nothing was catered.

How long does it take to cook a Thanksgiving meal for 400 people? Many people worked on Sunday from 6 a.m. - 6 p.m. and were back again Monday at 7 a.m. and worked until 9 p.m. Monday evening.

CCRI cooked 12 - 20 lb. and 6 - 12 lb. turkeys, which were purchased from Spring Prairie Meats in rural Hawley. Over 10 pumpkins were used to make all of the pumpkin bars.

Who did all the preparation for the event? The supervisors, office team members & board members took part in all jobs ranging from planning, shopping, cooking, serving and clean up.

Microsoft team member and CCRI board member, Julie Herman has volunteered many hours at CCRI. As a way to thank her for her contributions to the community, Microsoft matched her volunteer hours with a \$2000 cash donation to CCRI.

CCRI used \$1000 of these funds to sponsor the Client Appreciation Turkey Dinner. Since Microsoft's donation was more than the cost of the meal, the remainder of the money was added to our service enhancement fund for the clients.

Donations were also received from the following:

Hornbacher's – Moorhead  
Courtyard by Marriott – Moorhead – door prize  
Shannon Bock, Roger Manz - potatoes  
Rhonda King - pumpkin bars  
Pan-O-Gold - buns  
Great Harvest Bread - dinner rolls  
Breadsmith - dinner rolls  
Sonnenberg Farms - decorations

*Thanks for choosing CCRI  
to provide your services.*

## *CCRI Receives Match Grant*

CCRI, Inc has received a match grant in the amount of \$5000 from Dakota Medical Foundation for program support for our Community Connection Program. This unique CCRI program opens the door to even greater involvement for those we serve.

From local activities such as bowling and softball leagues, to day trips, to Camp H.E.R.O., to extended travel to popular destinations; our staff is dedicated to expanding each participant's experience based on individual needs and aspirations. This program supports and encourages people to become even more visible and productive members of our community.

Dakota Medical Foundation focuses its efforts on improving health and access to medical and dental care in the region, with a special emphasis on children. Since 1996, the Foundation has invested over \$35 million to over 300 nonprofit organizations in the region. For more information, see [www.dakmed.org](http://www.dakmed.org).

## *Memorials*

*In memory of*

**Leonard Norgren**

by Sue Severson

**Dan Stetz**

by Jennifer & Phil Behrens

**Kari Borgen**

by Jack & Kelly Borgen

*While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of donor records, errors occasionally occur. If your name has been omitted, misspelled, please accept our apologies and contact Jody at 218-331-2024.*



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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 J. Olsen    Dave Lysne  
 Deb Kukowski    Hal Wentzel    Catie Herman  
 Roger Erickson    Harriette McCaul

### CCRI Sr. Leadership

Rhonda King, Executive Director	20 Years
Lynette Weber, Options Director	17 Years
Shannon Bock, Director of Programs	14 Years
Sue Lopez, SLS Director	12 Years
Carolyn Cossette, Medical Services	11 Years
Jody Hudson, Development Director	9 years
Mark McGuigan, Business Manager	7 years
Carmel Froemke, ARMHS Director	5 years
Andrea Ryan, HR Director	2 years



*Season's Greetings  
and  
Happy New Year!*

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