

Manh...

Its been a long journey, but his life is finally getting back on track.

Manh was born in 1974 in Vietnam where he lived until he was 12. At age 12, Manh left Vietnam and his parents behind on a journey for a better life in the United States. When asked how he got here, Manh explained that he left in a boat about the size of his kitchen with 60 strangers. He remembered hearing gun fire in the distance when they departed and that they didn't have much food. After three days he arrived very hungry in Indonesia where he spent the next three months in a refugee camp until he finally boarded a plane for the United States.



When Manh was 12 years old, his parents placed him in a small boat with total strangers and for 3 days they floated with little provisions until they landed in Indonesia.

In 1989, Manh's journey brought him to Perham, Minnesota where he attended high school, learned English and lived with his first foster family. It was a bit of a culture and climate shock from the hot and humid climate of Vietnam, but his first foster family quickly introduced him to local customs. They went deer hunting in the fall and ice fishing in the winter which he described simply as, "Brrrrrrr." He eventually moved to Moorhead and graduated from Moorhead High in 1994 and on April 3, 1998, he officially became an American citizen. A moment he talks about with great pride.

By now Manh was experiencing every aspect of the American dream. He was free to come and go as he pleased, he was making good money as a welder at Case I.H., owned a home and a new pickup. Everything was going according to plan, until he was diagnosed with diabetes in his late twenties. His diabetes came on so severely that by 2003, he suffered an anoxic brain injury caused by repeated episodes of unconsciousness and a lack of oxygen from diabetic comas.

Although Manh understands and speaks English, he had enough of a language barrier that it complicated his ability to understand the management of his disease. This was further

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compounded by the fact that he lived alone so there was no one to administer the necessary medical treatment when he had an insulin reaction. By the age of 29, his diabetes had spiraled out of control to the point that Manh was living in a nursing home, was on disability and social services had initiated the process to have a court appointed guardian assigned to oversee his care.

While living in the nursing home, Manh became depressed. His guardian thought he would be thrilled when she was able to arrange the services he needed in the community so he could move back home, but he wasn't. He was depressed and scared. Manh lived in fear that he would suffer another diabetic coma landing him back in the nursing home. In addition, due to the brain injury he lost many of the skills he once possessed; thus, he was scared he couldn't care for himself. To Manh, the American dream he was living seemed like it was a thing of the past. He was no longer able to hold his job and had to go on disability permanently and he couldn't maintain a driver's license. His pickup is still parked in the garage and is a sad reminder of the freedom he has lost. Manh dreams that one day his diabetes will be stable enough to drive it again. This is when Manh's journey brought him to CCRI.

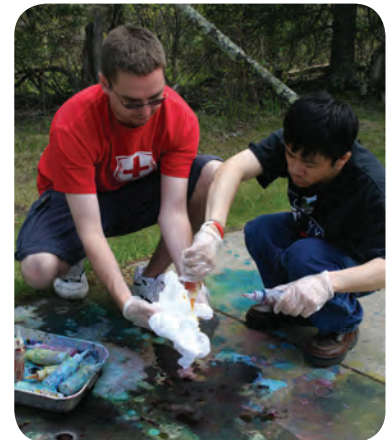
The first day Manh arrived at CCRI, he met Dave Pompe. Dave's job was to coordinate the services Manh needed to continue life in his home and regain as much independence as possible. Manh was nervous about getting services,

but was quickly put at ease when he met Dave as they realized they were classmates back in Perham. Dave scheduled staff in Manh's home for the better part of the day to oversee his health, even so, his diabetes continued to be nearly impossible to manage. In addition, Manh's depression continued to worsen. At this point, it was recommended that his health and safety needs required more supervision than hourly services could provide so he started receiving 24 hour services in 2005.

It's been a long journey, but Manh's life is finally getting back on track.

When I visited with Manh he was quick to tell me he is happy again.

Manh & Dan experiment with tie dyeing a shirt at CCRI's Camp H.E.R.O.



He wouldn't have had to say anything as it is easy to observe. He's full of smiles every time you see him, he is engaged in life again and he is no longer isolated. He has many friends and is active in the community and he is working again. In December, Manh and I had the opportunity to ring the bell for the Salvation Army with 10 other people. I found myself thinking, this is hardly the Manh I know. He was animated, boisterous, laughing and using the bell as if he was leading us in a choir. It was great to see.

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Manh told me he was still very sick through 2007 as noted by frequent and long hospital stays, but in 2008, everything finally started to improve. I asked him what he thinks changed. Manh told me he feels he understands his diabetes much better than before. It sounds like the right combination of everything has come together for him. His health is monitored very closely by CCRI's nurse and his professional caregivers and he is on the right combination of medications. Manh has a whole team of outstanding people helping him, but two ladies, Janet Nordby & Diana Weil really stand out as deserving much of the credit for Manh's changes. Diana is from Brazil so she and Manh have found much in common.

Diana understands many of the struggles Manh faces. For example, when dealing with doctors and nurses she knows that Manh's language barrier will limit his understanding if they don't take their time explaining what is going on. She insists on gathering all the necessary information so she understands what is going on with his health. Then in a calm and comforting demeanor, she explains it to Manh so that he understands. In addition, their cultures are similar in terms of the types of food they like. Thus, Diana has focused on teaching Manh the importance of diet and using ingredients

he likes. He used to eat a lot of frozen processed meals. Now thanks to Diana, she and Manh spend a lot of time in the kitchen preparing easy to reheat meals that Manh can enjoy, yet meet the restrictions of a diabetic diet.

A year ago, Manh was struggling to care for himself, so the thought of caring for a pet was far out of reach. Thanks to Diana's help Manh has gained the independence to meet the challenge of a puppy. She helped him make an informed decision about the kind of dog he might like and along came

Lola, a dachshund puppy. I asked Manh about Lola and with a big smile, he said, "She is 'chewing up' the house." Lola has really helped Manh with his isolation and depression. She provides a reason to interact with others. Like a proud parent, Manh is happy to tell everyone he meets all about her.



Manh with his puppy, Lola pictured with Diana, his professional caregiver..

Diana and Janet have really helped Manh with his confidence and depression.

Manh never used to have friends that he saw on a regular basis, as he chose to isolate himself. Thanks to them, Manh has grown accustomed to having people over for supper and even goes to his friends' houses on a regular basis. In addition, he is working again and is active in all kinds of community activities. The friendships have really enriched and improved the quality of his life.

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Janet encouraged Manh to give his house a little make over. She helped him pick out paint. Together they painted his whole home. This was a new learning experience for Manh, as he had never painted before. After saving his money for several months, he also purchased new furniture for his living room making it even more fun to have friends over.

Janet explained how Diana helped Manh vote for the first time this year. She said, "It was a really big deal for him. He is much more patriotic than many people who have lived here their whole life." It was at this point that Manh went and got his citizenship papers to show me along with a picture of him and some other people from CCRI with Morrie Lanning at the Capitol last year. It was obvious he takes democracy very seriously. I asked Manh if he ever plans on traveling back to Vietnam to visit his parents. He told me that he had been there two times prior to his health problems and would like to go again. When I asked him what life there was like he said, "I remember that everyone both children and adults smoked, because it was one of the only things they could do as a sign of freedom. Freedom there is very different than what it is like in America." As far as ever going back to live there he said, "My parents want me to stay here where I can work and be safe. This is my home." In addition, he mentioned that health care and insulin may not be available for him in Vietnam.

The progress Manh has made over the last year has been immeasurable. The journey over the past year seems as significant as the very first journey he took from Vietnam 20 years prior. It seems the American dream he was living is back within his reach, thanks to a group of dedicated professionals who are privileged to work with him.

Rhonda King, Executive Director



Manh and Dave try out their canoeing skills at CCRI's Camp H.E.R.O. .

State Bank & Trust Employees Donate Pay It Forward Funds



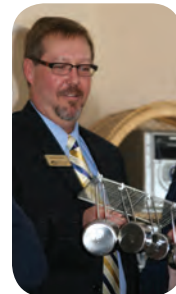
The guys at the home that was remodeled have formed a "jug band" and invited the State Bank & Trust employees over for some music and fun to thank them for their generosity.

One of CCRI's biggest struggles is to find accessible housing for people with limited mobility. This type of housing doesn't generally exist on the market and the remodeling to make an existing home accessible is costly. CCRI Board Member, Roger Erickson, mentioned to Warren Hilde of State Bank & Trust that CCRI was looking to purchase a house and remodel it for accessibility. Warren was interested in our project and learning more about what was needed to make the house accessible.

Collectively, State Bank & Trust employees contributed \$9,000 in Pay It Forward funds towards the remodeling of the home. We also received a \$5000 match grant from Dakota Medical Foundation making the total donation \$14,000 which paid for nearly all of the remodeling costs. ***An additional \$500 check was given to CCRI on the day of the gathering making the grand total \$14,500!*

The project included building an accessible ramp, expanding the size of the main bathroom to accommodate a roll in shower, modifying the hallway so a wheelchair can maneuver the corners, moving some kitchen cupboards and adding solid surface flooring throughout the living areas so a wheelchair can move about freely.

On behalf of the four men who live there, thank you for helping make their new home accessible. Because of the generosity of State Bank & Trust employees this house is now the place they'll call "their home" for the rest of their lives.



The State Bank & Trust employees try out some "unique" musical instruments and join the hootenanny.

CCRI's Got Talent

At our recent Talent Show we had an opportunity to see the awesome talents of those we serve and enjoy some good ole family-style fun!

In addition to the performances, there were displays of arts and crafts, baked goods, and artwork for those who did not want to perform on stage. The SLS Department treated everyone to a variety of tasty salads, too! Every year the size of our event grows and has become an annual event. This year the room was packed to the brim with over 275 people in attendance.



Diane



Kathy



Justin



Noah



Nicole



Travis & Liz



Bob



John



Aimee, Joan, Pam & Sharon



Miranda



Jeremy



Shena



Chris



Sara



David & Katie



Ernie



Marcy

Giving Hearts Day Results

You can't believe how exciting it was around here on Giving Hearts Day! I am thrilled to report that nearly \$15,000 was raised for CCRI Inc. We also received a match of \$5000 from Dakota Medical Foundation which brings the total to \$19,805!!!! Proceeds will provide much needed service enhancements/modifications for the people we serve- thus enhancing and enriching their lives.

Thanks to many of you, Dakota Medical Foundation and other generous supporters, the lives of those we serve will be impacted in many positive ways! The success of this unique and important fundraiser depends on your dedication and participation and we thank you for your commitment.

Again, CCRI, Inc. could not provide the person centered services for those with disabilities without your support and gifts. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of those we serve.

A total of \$701,334 was raised on Giving Hearts Day which will benefit many charitable causes in ND and Western MN. This incredible outpouring of financial support serves as a testament to the kind, caring and generous people of our community and beyond!

Jody Hudson, Development Director

In Remembrance

February 11, 2009 - **Heather Kazemba**,
age 25.

January 19, 2009 - **Marie Berg**, age 60

December 20, 2008 - **Ramon Alonzo, Sr.**,
age 56.

December 24, 2008 - **Branton Garwood**,
age 27.

December 24, 2008 - **Florence Ames**,
age 51.

Memorials

In memory of

Heather Kazemba

Krystal Schlaht
Rose Schlaht
Teresa Brantner
Nancy Staiger
Rhonda King
Ken, Cindy, Natalie and Eric Gilles

Robert Anderson

Sue Severson

Charles Heyerdahl

Sharon Grugel

John Bauer

Postal Employees Canteen Fund,
Grand Forks, ND.

While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of donor records, errors occasionally occur. If your name has been omitted, or 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

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 Barb Matthees - *Secretary*
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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	3 years

Thank You to Outgoing CCRI Board Member Michael J. Olsen

Michael J. Olsen served on CCRI's Board of Directors from July of 2007 to January of 2009. We would like to thank Michael for his commitment and dedication to the mission of CCRI.

Michael became a member of the Board at the time when CCRI was working on developing its marketing and branding strategies. His work experience and oversight was invaluable in the finalization of our new logo and brand.