


## *Journey of Hope*

*By Joyce Anderson*



It was a call in the middle of the night beginning a journey of heartbreak, despair, and hope. A call no parent is prepared for—a car accident. A stranger’s voice letting us know our son, Jon, was in the trauma unit in Minneapolis and we should come now. I was not aware of time during a trip that usually takes four hours, but I do remember my husband Steve pulling out to pass yet one more car. One of those cars was a state trooper, but he didn’t bother to stop our white blur of a car as it sped past. When we arrived at North Memorial Hospital in Robbinsdale, we were greeted with dire news. Jon was in surgery and in critical condition. That long night and following day we sat in that surgical waiting room praying and crying, and crying and praying as family members gathered. Medical staff tried to prepare us for what we would see when we were finally able to see Jon. So



Jon and family participate in the CCRI Walk & Roll-a-thon

many tubes and machines that it was impossible to believe my son could be there and in need of all that. My son, who was a state champion swimmer, was in a coma and could not breathe on his own.

The days and the weeks and the months went by. Jon was moved from critical care to lesser care, from one facility to the next as his needs changed. During this time we watched our son fight for his life. We had been told it was likely Jon would remain in a vegetative state, but he was proving all the experts wrong. We watched him relearn how to breathe on his own, eat and walk. Due to the brain injury, Jon had lost his ability to speak, but he was communicating with us through facial expressions and hand gestures.

Through all of this we met many wonderful people—people who were encouraging and shared our belief that Jon would once again live a satisfying and fulfilling life. Through

the struggles of finding a place for Jon where he could continue to be supported in the process of regaining his health and rebuilding a life, we were fortunate to find CCRI. Jon has been with CCRI for five years and we have never regretted a minute of our association with them. Jon's caregivers are as invested as we are in Jon's life. CCRI team members have become part of Jon's family. We all celebrate in his successes. When there are struggles needing to be addressed, Jon's team gathers to problem-solve—to come up with a solution that will enable Jon to grow and be successful. No problem is too big or hard to overcome or work around. God was gracious when he sent CCRI to Jon.



Jon and long-time caregiver Wayne Zitzow.

Besides the loving care CCRI provides to Jon, they do such a nice job coordinating with outside agencies that provide services for Jon—no easy job. Vocational services, a behavioral specialist, a speech and language therapist, a psychiatrist, doctors, and

dentists are just some of the service providers that are a part of Jon's team requiring coordination. Because Jon was living in another county at the time of his accident all decisions need to be approved by the home county staff. This adds just one more layer to the complexity of Jon's care.



Making a tie-dye shirt at Camp H.E.R.O.

Being a parent to a son with a disability, the most important thing to me is the support and care Jon receives day in and day out. There have been changes in staffing over the years with CCRI and each time someone leaves Jon's team I grieve. Each caregiver and coordinator is important to Jon and in turn important to us. They are family. But each time we have been blessed with a new staff member who takes Jon's care seriously and provides a warm and nurturing environment for Jon. It makes my day when I can call my son and ask him if he is having a good day. I hear the smile in his voice as he replies "Yes!"

# *iPad gives freedom to people with disabilities*

*By Jody Hudson*

Arlene was a successful business woman with a husband, children and a beautiful home. But in one split second in 2004 everything changed when one side of her body suddenly went numb. Arlene, in her late 50s, was having a stroke.

The stroke left Arlene unable to walk independently and not able to speak, however, she did not lose any of her cognitive ability. After her hospital stay, Arlene moved into a nursing home for one year to help her with much needed rehabilitation.

When she moved back home she continued with physical, occupational and speech therapy.

Arlene still could not verbalize her needs and refused to use speech devices because they looked childish. When introduced to the iPad and the app Proloquo2Go her world changed. The iPad gave Arlene a voice. She is now able to communicate in all aspects of her life using the device. The iPad also has apps that help her practice and strengthen her ability to speak. She now can verbalize some of her wants and needs in three- to four-word phrases. Apps designed for the iPad are now giving clients of CCRI, like Arlene, new ways to express themselves. Technology is giving them a voice and breaking the wall of silence—it's thrilling!

Every day technology is changing our lives in ways we never imagined. For people with disabilities not only can an iPad improve communication—like it did for Arlene—it can also assist in the development of social skills and enhance the ability to learn for others.

For people who struggle to speak due to autism, brain injury, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome or stroke, the iPad and apps provide ways to choose words, symbols and images to express moods, needs and thoughts. There are also scheduling apps that provide visual schedules and choice prompts to guide a person through their day. The sky is the limit. New apps are coming out daily.



Through the use of an iPad and programs such as Proloquo2Go people with disabilities are better able to communicate.



For 6-year-old Bella, who is autistic, the iPad helps with her struggle of transitioning from one task to the next. A visual picture schedule and a visual timer on the iPad helps keep her on task and allows her to transition from one activity to another smoothly. Bella also uses video modeling on her iPad—she watches a prerecorded video of herself performing an activity successfully and then imitates the targeted outcome.

The savings for using the iPad are significant when compared to traditional, less-dynamic therapy products that cost thousands of dollars. iPads are now available for as little as \$329 and a majority of apps cost less than \$300 and some are free.



Bella uses her iPad to keep her on schedule.

Besides being cost effective, another perk of the iPad is that they are less conspicuous than many of the bulky communication devices they replace. A person with difficulty communicating can feel more comfortable using an iPad as it's common to see people using an iPad in public. Additionally, an iPad's compact size allows it to easily be attached to a table or wheelchair.

The iPad is an alternative communication and learning device that allows people with disabilities to flourish in tremendous ways. Apps grant people new and amazing opportunities by fostering enhanced communication, independence, daily life skills, and developmental growth. More importantly, the iPad gives those incapable of speaking a voice.

Arlene and Bella are great examples of how this technology can open doors for the people we serve. Unfortunately, due to their limited incomes, many clients of CCRI can't afford to purchase these life-enhancing devices themselves. If you would like to help put a revolutionary resource in the hands of the people we serve, please consider supporting CCRI this holiday season. Our goal for this project is to raise \$10,000.

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## *Stay Informed*

In an effort to keep you up to date with the wonderful things happening at CCRI, we will be introducing a bi-monthly e-newsletter in 2013. The addition of this newsletter will enable us to connect you with CCRI-related happenings in a more timely manner.

To subscribe, send an email to [CThorne@CreativeCare.org](mailto:CThorne@CreativeCare.org) with "Subscribe to Newsletter" as the subject or include your email address on the enclosed envelope and send it to us.



# *Memories of Betty*

*By Shannon Bock*

Every once in a while a person comes into our life and leaves an unforgettable impression on our heart and mind. For me, Betty Grieson was one of those people. When I introduced myself as her new coordinator more than 18 years ago, I was treated to my first glimpse of her unforgettable feistiness. I was getting a tour of her home from her roommate, Stephanie, and as Stephanie proudly showed me her cherished keepsakes, Betty looked up from her knitting and told me “I don’t like you, get out of my room.” Stephanie didn’t miss a beat; she told Betty to mind her own business and continued showing me her things. From that day on, I learned that Betty had an intense spirit and pep about her—I instantly liked her. I also learned a tip from her wise roommate Stephanie—the way to Betty’s heart was through Diet Coke. Words of wisdom that helped create a bond that I cherish and miss today.



Betty was very determined in all she set out to do. I met Betty when she was 70 years old, an age that most of us think about retiring. However, the older she got, the more committed she became to her job, whether in the JCPenney stock room or at Infinity Windows. On the job, Betty was the “informal” leader. Although there was a job coach to oversee the work of her crew, Betty took on the role of ensuring her co-workers were doing their jobs to the best of their ability. She took great pride in the work she did and was proud of every paycheck earned. In true Betty fashion, she refused to even consider cutting back her work schedule. She worked until her body could no longer physically handle it. She was 86.

Betty had the great fortune to live with roommates that became a second family to her. She shared a home and an unforgettable connection with many of them for more than 20 years.

Throughout Betty’s years with CCRI she was blessed to be surrounded by a fabulous group of compassionate and professional caregivers. Although Betty was in a supervised environment, her caregivers were able to give her the gift of independence. They provided individual focus and took the time to understand Betty’s wants and needs. They encouraged her to dream of life’s possibilities in her pursuit of happiness. With the support of her CCRI team she was able to experience vacations, make memories and establish rich friendships. She got to fulfill some of her dreams by visiting Las Vegas and Disneyland. Betty’s caregivers made sure she had the opportunity to thrive and take part in all that life had to offer.

On Betty’s 86<sup>th</sup> birthday she received a diagnosis of inoperable cancer. I visited with her shortly after the diagnosis and was astounded by the clarity she had about this next transition in her life. As she patted her bed for me to sit down next to her, she spoke with me about her dear friend and former roommate Stephanie. It was important to her that I understand that she had something to look forward to on her next journey—seeing Stephanie again in heaven. Betty found comfort in the thought she would once again have her cherished friend by her side—roommates forever.

For 22 years Betty was able to call CCRI her home. Her journey with us ended in her home surrounded by those who cared for and loved her. Betty will be remembered as a strong, spirited, tenacious woman. I will miss her dearly.

## *A Basket of Hope*

Most of the homeless individuals we help through our Mental Health Program have very few, if any, household items when they leave the shelter. To help people make their new apartment feel like home, a Welcome Basket is provided. The basket consists of a laundry basket filled with the basic bathroom necessities such as a rug, shower curtain and rings, towels, soap, shampoo, etc. This is a great (and easy!) opportunity for individuals, families, service groups and businesses. It feels great to give items to some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Giving is easy. Just drop off your baskets at CCRI, 725 Center Avenue in Moorhead.



CCRI is grateful to the Soroptimist International of Moorhead group who give baskets to women escaping homelessness.

## *Share Your Skills, Volunteer With CCRI*

Unleash your talents and inspire others by volunteering at CCRI. You will have an immediate impact on the people we serve. There are so many ways to help. Would one of the following be right for you?

- Develop arts and crafts projects
- Help develop diet-specific meal plans for individuals
- Serve as a front desk assistant
- Share your professional skills. (Your expertise might be just the thing we need)



Providing different opportunities for fun social interactions and giving lots of personal attention builds self-esteem and enhances and enriches lives. As a volunteer you are also energizing our staff. By working side by side with our caregivers you are reinforcing how important their jobs really are.

For more information on you can get involved, meet new people and leave a lasting impression in someone's life, contact Chuck Thorne at [CThorne@CreativeCare.org](mailto:CThorne@CreativeCare.org) or 218-331-2026.



## Debra—Giving Back

For Debra Schillinger, mental illness has been a lifelong struggle. Debra has lived with chronic depression since childhood, and her path to recovery has been long and turbulent. Debra's mental illness began quite early—she was first diagnosed around 9 years old. She remembers feeling sad "all of the time," and she was constantly behind in school. By sixth grade, Debra was having suicidal thoughts, and her depression became overwhelming. In high school, she turned to drugs and alcohol, and she dropped out in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

Debra's depression stayed with her well into adulthood. She married and had two children, but the deep depression and thoughts of suicide would not relent. She would have days where she was "very sad," and just getting out of bed in the morning was a struggle. When Debra was about 30 she had what she describes as a "nervous break" and was hospitalized. She divorced and her children were placed in foster care for a time.

Thankfully, Debra was connected with a mental health case manager whose role was to support her as she navigated the system. Her case manager helped her coordinate her treatments and medications. This person also helped Debra apply for Medical Assistance (MA) so that she could afford her care. Debra was reunited with her kids and she began rebuilding her life.

However, despite all her efforts, Debra's depression was resistant to treatment, consuming her for long stretches of time. To make matters worse, her physical health was quickly deteriorating as well. This only increased her hopelessness and thoughts of suicide were never far from Debra's mind during that time. It was her children that kept her going.

After cycling in and out of hospitals for several more years, Debra was connected with a new case manager, who she says was "instrumental" in her recovery. This person helped Debra connect with treatment providers and support services that were effective and helped her

learn to believe in herself again. She enrolled in college, taking time off as she needed to and eventually things began to settle down. About sixteen years ago, Debra had a realization: she wanted to live and help other people like her.

Today, Debra spends her time guiding other people who live with mental illnesses on their road to recovery. She has a job at CCRI as an Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS) Peer Specialist, and the experience has been amazing. She helps people learn about their illness, keep up with their treatment plans and build skills to live independently. Debra revels in the opportunity to help other people find "the same happiness I've found." Looking back, Debra is in awe of how far she's come. "I've gone from not being able to get out of bed to helping others recover," she says. She also speaks publicly about her experiences to help dispel the stigma surrounding mental illnesses.

Above all else, Debra is resilient. At age 56, despite lingering physical health problems, she is the "happiest she's ever been." For Debra, services such as mental health case management and ARMHS are essential. "My wellness is possible because of the services I've had," she explains. Without these services, she says, "I would not be alive."

Debra wants legislators to understand how difficult life can be for people with mental illnesses, but also that recovery is possible. With treatment and support services, along with access to medication, people with mental illnesses can get well, go back to school, get a job and live out their dreams. Debra is living proof.

*This article was originally published by NAMI Minnesota.*





**Creative Care for  
Reaching Independence**

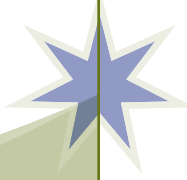
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The mission of CCRI is to enhance and enrich the lives and learning of people with disabilities.

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



## *Memorials/Honorariums*

*received from September 1, 2012 to November 30, 2012*

### **In Memory of Mary Krumheuer**

Mandi Krumheuer

### **In Memory of Mike Nelson**

Linda Hovland & Shannon Gilbertson

### **In Memory of Audrey Simmons**

Linda Hovland & Shannon Gilbertson

### **In Memory of Bob Loe**

Don & Linda Halvorson

Linda Hovland & Shannon Gilbertson

### **In Memory of Loren Schuck**

Linda Hovland & Shannon Gilbertson

Don & Linda Halvorson

Rhonda Rice

Jody & Fred Hudson

### **In Memory of Betty Grieson**

Renae & Glen Hanson

### **In Memory of Todd Singer**

Jennifer & Phil Behrens

### **In Memory of June Barth**

Linda Hovland & Shannon Gilbertson

Mark Hoffman

Boyd & Dianne Sanden

Jennifer & Phil Behrens

Doris Dibley

Danet Erickson

Landon & Melissa Behrens

Mike & Gretchen Behrens

**Save  
the  
Date**



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be found at [www.facebook.com/CreativeCare](http://www.facebook.com/CreativeCare).