



Life with Lizzy

Twenty four years ago, Elizabeth Ann entered the world. She was born to parents who loved her very much but, due to their own disabilities, weren't able to take care of her. Due to her fragile medical state, Liz frequently required resuscitation. She spent almost the whole first year of her life in the hospital while the social workers searched for a foster family for her. She was absolutely the most adorable little baby and the entire nursing staff loved her. I was one of those nurses. My husband and I already had four children of our own, but after some consideration, we became foster parents so Liz could come home. When Liz was 9 months old, she joined our clan!

Life was stressful. Liz had frequent breath-holding spells. She had them in the grocery store, the mall, getting her hair cut, in church, and at our son's hockey games. We had an oxygen tank under our bed and I carried an ambu bag with me at all times. She was on an apnea monitor. Getting a break was nearly impossible, as she needed constant nursing care. When she started school, so did I, as her own nurse. The constant pressure of being ready to act in an emergency was wearing.

By age 8, Liz outgrew the breath-holding episodes and her social worker suggested looking into an agency for support. After working with two other agencies in town



and not being happy with what they could provide, we tried CCRI. What an incredible organization! The CCRI caregivers were fun and energetic individuals who truly cared about Liz. They took her bowling, swimming, shopping and got her out into the community. This gave us the break that we needed to "refill our tanks".

When Liz turned 21, we started thinking about finding her a place of her own. We worked closely with CCRI to find the perfect home. In August of 2011, Liz moved into a beautiful, CCRI-owned home with three other young women who were about the same age. Although the move was tough on all of us, it really felt right because we knew she was in good hands. They kept her so busy! She enjoyed going to CCRI's prom, ARC dances, having pot lucks with her CCRI friends, celebrating birthdays, going swimming, and working out at the YMCA. She's been involved in Special Olympics bowling, basketball, bocce ball and soccer. All the while accompanied by her phenomenal CCRI caregivers!

Changes in Liz's behavioral needs prohibited Liz from staying in her first home, but CCRI worked hard to find a suitable new place for her, as did her social worker. Funding was obtained, and this past September she moved into her own apartment supported by CCRI caregivers. Liz is proud of her apartment and is working hard to make it a success!

—Clare Garberg

Thank you Clare for inviting CCRI to be a part of Liz's journey. Twenty-four years later, she is still stealing the hearts of those that care for her.

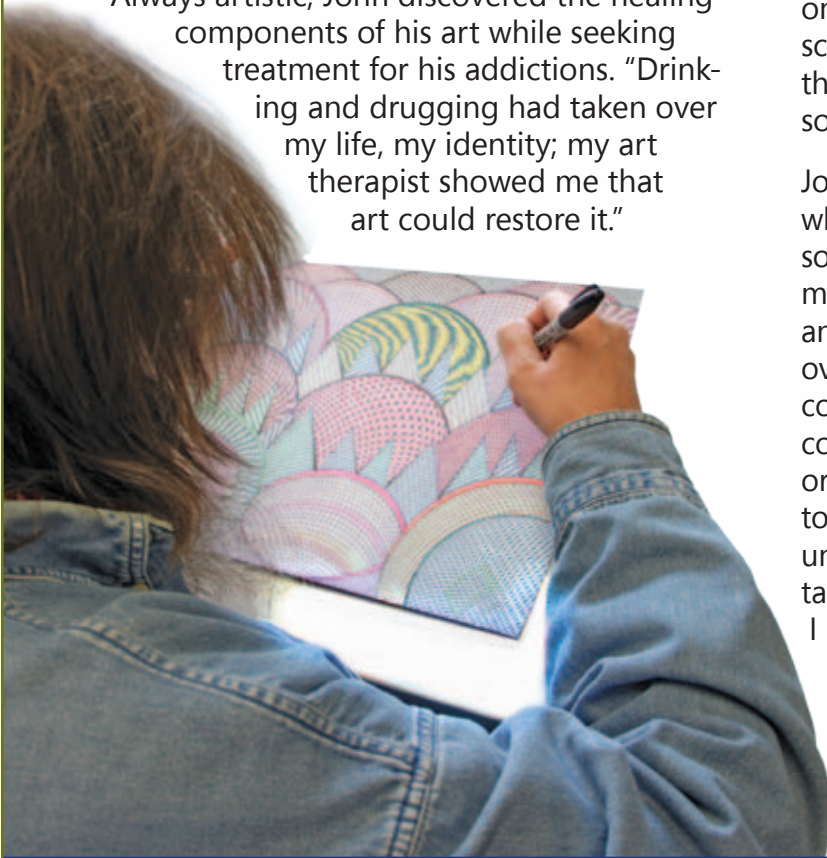
Drawing On His

John says that art has saved his life. He was an alcoholic living on the streets and sometimes used other drugs.

Always artistic, John discovered the healing components of his art while seeking treatment for his addictions. "Drinking and drugging had taken over my life, my identity; my art therapist showed me that art could restore it."

John has learned to use creativity as an outlet to help him cope with his struggles. "My art is a powerful way for me to express myself, its good personal therapy. I wasted my youth on drugs and trouble. I started lots of things, schools, jobs, programs, but never finished them. I never knew how good it felt to finish something until I finished my first piece of art."

John refers to his art style as unplugged—which is hard to believe, since his work is so precise and intricate. Surprisingly, he uses minimal tools. A protractor, fine point markers and poster board. John spends weeks hunched over his kitchen table listening to an eclectic collection of music. "My art is tedious and mind consuming and requires lots of patience—it's organized chaos. I have no idea what I'm going to do until I start it. I try to make them all unique." When asked if he ever makes a mistake, John laughed and quickly quipped "Lots! I make the mistakes a part of the work. I never ever start over or throw anything away. I have tossed away a lot of beautiful things in my past. Life is messy and full of mistakes. Now I know how to live with mistakes and make them work for me."



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s Inner Strength

John's artwork at the CCRI Talent Show immediately drew a crowd and a meeting was arranged with Dayna Del Val from the Arts Partnership who encouraged John to apply for a grant. "When I showed Dayna my work I felt like an artist for the first time. Just knowing that she believes in me means so much and it is so worth being alive and sober." With the help of CCRI, a grant was written. John received funding to frame his work.

With the support of CCRI, John attended an artist curator event sponsored by the Arts Partnership. "I was so nervous and was unsure if I belonged there, but then people started to gather around my work and they kept giving me their business cards—I have had a fear of public speaking but found that I enjoy talking about my pieces; it feels good to be heard. Through art, people see me, the real me and I feel accepted."

John, a charming and rather eccentric man, is still shaped by his past but that past no longer defines him. "When people believed in me, I started to believe in myself."

John is slowly learning to navigate the next steps in this new chapter of his life. He is living proof that one should never underestimate the power of art and the importance of having someone believe in you.



John is proud to have his work prominently displayed in CCRI's main lobby.



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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.

Ring in the New Year and Support CCRI

CCRI has been chosen to be the recipient of the West Fargo Shakers New Year's Eve event. All proceeds raised will directly support CCRI. The West Fargo Shakers are of group of nine generous people that like to "shake" up New Year's Eve by throwing one of the largest parties in the area. Established in 2007, the group has raised more than \$36,000 for local charities.

*December 31, 7 P.M.-2 A.M.
Speedway Event Center—West Fargo, ND*

Tickets: \$15 each, are available at CCRI or email wfshakers@gmail.com with how many you want. Tickets will be held until 9 P.M. the night of the event. Tickets will also be available at the door until sold out.

7-9 P.M.—Appetizers
7-10 P.M.—Bonus Raffle
7-10 P.M.—50/50 Raffle
9 P.M.—2 A.M.—Live Music:
Billy D & The Crystals
Midnight—Balloon Drop
sponsored by
Bell State Bank & Trust



Drink Specials:
\$3.00 Pounders
\$2.50 Wells

Free champagne at
midnight courtesy of the
West Fargo Shakers!