

How Technology Transformed Crystal's Life

by Marisa Jackels, Tellwell

Crystal has a contagious laugh. You can hear it from down the hallway as you walk to her apartment in Moorhead, MN, where she lives happily on her own.

Inside, one of the first things you see is a sign that reads, "Enter with a happy heart." Crystal herself wears a near-constant smile, easily bursting into her recognizable giggle as she volleys witty remarks between her caregivers.

"I love pulling pranks on people," Crystal told us with a mischievous grin.

"Yeah, and I always fall for them!" Tamara Peters, Crystal's Residential Coordinator with CCRI, said with a laugh.

The Crystal we see today is far different from the Crystal of three years ago. For many years, her ongoing struggle with physical and mental illness meant she lived in a group home and relied on

CCRI 24-hour staff. She was regularly hospitalized due to struggles with her mental health, and was scared to live without her 24-hour staff—yet she craved independence.



"When I first met Crystal more than two years ago, she was lethargic, with no interest in getting up and going for her day," Charlotte, one of Crystal's CCRI caregivers, said.

When caregivers came to visit Crystal, they had to contact staff for a key because she would not answer the door. During the week, CCRI staff had to monitor Crystal closely

to ensure she was taking her medication. When she attempted to participate in social events, Crystal would often back out at the last minute due to anxiety.

"I always felt too shy," Crystal said. "I didn't want to talk about my mental illness to anyone."

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At first, Crystal was hesitant to try the program.

"I was really nervous," Crystal said. "But now, I can see it was the best decision I've made."

CCRI is one of only three organizations in Minnesota to offer a program that utilizes technology in this way. It's part of CCRI's commitment to remain innovative as they live out their mission: to enhance and enrich the lives and learning of people with disabilities. In our current era of rapid technological advancement, CCRI continues to research and explore innovative ways to provide independence. Technology such as voice-activated tools, sensors, monitors, and more are truly transforming lives.

Such transformation is clearly seen in Crystal's story. In the two and a half years since Crystal began living with the Independent by Design program, her friends and caregivers at CCRI have seen a significant change.

Everything began to change when a CCRI staff member suggested Crystal try living on her own with the Independent By Design program, which uses technology to provide remote care. Tools such as remote sensors on windows, doors, and cabinets allow staff to ensure Crystal is safe. A pendant acts as a direct line of contact that can call CCRI staff with the push of a button. A medicine distribution device called a MedMinder distributes medicine at the time it should be taken, and gives an audio and visual reminder to alert the individual.

"We knew Crystal was capable of living without 24-hour care. We wanted to offer her more independence while still giving her the comfort of having access to staff support," Tamara said. "The Independent by Design program is a great fit."



"Independent by Design has allowed Crystal the life that she wants to live," Tamara said. "It provides support where it's needed, but it also allows her to do whatever she wants when she wants."

Today, Crystal smiles as she welcomes CCRI caregivers at the door. She volunteers weekly at the Dorothy Day Food Pantry, cracking jokes with the workers. She enjoys the freedom to take the city bus anywhere in the community she would like. She is her own representative payee, takes her medication independently, and manages her mental health.

With her newfound self confidence, Crystal faces new challenges head on. This year, she completed her first Fargo 5K, attended CCRI's prom, and organized a team to do CCRI's Polar Plunge on Giving Hearts Day.

"I love being on my own," she said. "Now, I always have a good smile. And if I'm having a bad day, I know it's just for today. Tomorrow can be better."

For Tamara, Charlotte, and the many others who work with Crystal, watching her happiness continue to grow is one of the greatest joys of their work.

"Now, she is cheerful and happy and feels good about herself," Charlotte said. "I am so happy to have witnessed this turnaround in Crystal's emotional and mental well-being."



"We are endlessly proud of Crystal and all her accomplishments. It truly has been amazing to see," Tamara said, wiping her eyes.

"Crystal, you seriously have tears in my eyes!" she added, looking at Crystal—who, of course, laughed and smiled in Crystal fashion.

Most importantly, Crystal is experiencing the independence she has craved for so long,

and with it, a sense of responsibility that gives her confidence. The results can be seen in her physical and mental health.

"With the Independent by Design program, I can do what I want to do. And I have the staff that will help me through it," Crystal said. "I quit a lot of bad behaviors. And I feel really proud of myself."

This year, we are celebrating technology with our Tablescapes event on October 8. Join us as we share more of Crystal's story and explore new technology tools of today and tomorrow that are transforming lives with CCRI.

2019 Was A Hit.

Thanks to generous sponsors and amazing volunteers, CCRI is able to provide the Red River Adaptive Softball league. The league has one paid CCRI staff and relies on volunteers to coach, umpire and help coordinate the games. Volunteers also run wheelchairs to bases, bat for a few people, and do whatever they can to make the experience an enjoyable one.

Recreation positively impacts the health and quality of life of a community. Our league offers a unique opportunity for people with similar abilities to come together and participate in a fun and competitive activity. They learn the skills and rules of the game and most importantly learn to work as a team—which leads to future friendships.



2019



Thank You to the following 2019 Sponsors:

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Thanks to All Who Supported Camp HERO

Camp HERO (Helping Everyone Remove Obstacles) is a great example of what happens when a group of people are able to do the simplest things in the most extraordinary ways.

The smiles were abundant this summer as excited campers loaded on the bus ready to embark on an adventure at the Joy Ranch—Camp HERO was two short hours away.

Our caregivers make the most out of every minute by offering individualized support that ensures a unique experience for each person attending. Their commitment makes one realize that all things are possible with the right action—and that any moment can be extraordinary.

Thanks to generous donors and community partners like the FM Crusaders MC, we have been able to provide extraordinary moments at camp for more than 22 years. Activities include horseback riding, waterfront activities, campfires and countless camp crafts.





ARRM Cares Winners, Twice Is Nice

Minnesota has 20,000 caregivers eligible for nomination of a prestigious ARRM Cares Award. Each year, six winners are chosen from throughout the state. CCRI is proud to have TWO winners this year! Congratulations to Amber Lobdell and Madie Uglem! We are thrilled to have you on #TeamCCRI!

Madie Uglem

Lizzie has always wanted to go camping; however, her diagnosis had created some barriers to ensuring her safety in that environment. These challenges were something Madie was willing to help Lizzie overcome to ensure she would be able to participate in something she has always longed to partake in.

Madie began working with Lizzie and instantly formed a bond with her. Madie decided right away she was going to be in it for the long haul and wasn't worried about the daunting self-injurious behaviors Lizzie exhibited. Throughout the countless hours Madie spent with Lizzie each week, Madie found out Lizzie had always wanted to go camping. Madie problem-solved each risk area for Lizzie and developed a plan to control the environment as much as possible. Madie found a local park which would keep Lizzie close enough to her medical team but also gave the sense of being in the woods. This is where their overnight expedition would begin.

Unfortunately, weather interfered with Lizzie's plan of camping outside. This didn't stop Madie. Madie continued working on the goal, but changed the scenery of the trip. She hung a sign on Lizzie's bedroom door that said "Lizzie's Campground!" A tent was put up in Lizzie's room with clear lights hanging on the outside of the tent to emulate stars when the room was dark. Lizzie felt like this camping experience was so real, when she saw everything put up in her room she asked "Is there a bear?" Madie not only planned the sleeping arrangements but ensured the meal was planned as it would have been if the camping trip were outside. She helped Lizzie purchase hot dogs with the fixings and baked beans. They ended the night with home-made s'mores!

Madie was able to assist Lizzie to make her dream of going camping come true. Madie didn't let any barrier discourage Lizzie from pursuing her goal and took the time to adapt the environment to ensure it was as authentic as possible. Lizzie was beyond happy to have been able to camp with Madie.



Amber Lobdell

Amber's heart is tender, kind and, above all, loving. She wears it on her sleeve, opens it for those who need it and can magically warm the hearts of anyone who needs to feel loved. Amber is anything but ordinary, she is extraordinary!

Amber is a connector. She goes out of her way to ensure Lane, David, Brad and Greg connect with friends and community members. She understands the importance of maintaining friendships and finds opportunities that promote this. She helps to plan coffee dates and dinner dates and is always searching for community activities. Amber and the guys have participated in art classes, community education classes and sporting events. This group of friends keeps busy.

Greg loves to dance, so Amber is on the dance floor, encouraging, drawing others in and facilitating new friendships. These relationships have grown to include potlucks at Greg's house, invitations to other dances and the introduction of new dance moves.

Amber is creative. The men she works with have big emotions and huge personalities. While they care deeply for one another, sometimes conflicts arise. Amber is quick on her feet and is able to turn things around. When Lane left his roommate's birthday party, Amber took the time to find out why this usually happy situation was upsetting. Lane was upset everyone forgot it was Presidents' Day. Amber immediately worked her magic. She made medals, rounded up flags and presented Lane with a "Presidential Award" for remembering the holiday. She added red, white and blue sprinkles to the cupcakes and created a podium for Lane to give one of his famous speeches. After they sang Happy Birthday they concluded the party with singing The Star Spangled Banner and everyone was happy.



Amber is an advocate. She was one of the first to point out their current home wasn't meeting their needs. Age was beginning to affect their mobility and she worried about their future safety. Using her passion for her work, concern for her clients and gift of writing, Amber assisted with fundraising efforts to raise dollars to build a new, accessible home. She used many social platforms to move this dream to a reality. She introduced the "guys" to the community through her blog, corporate twitter account, newsletter articles and through public presentations. Amber delivered a keynote speech to more than 200 people and her words struck a chord in the hearts of everyone in the room.

Amber is level headed. When Lane needed her the most, she was able to stay calm and focused despite the fact that she was terrified. Amber considers the guys family and when Lane stopped breathing, she utilized the skills she had learned to perform CPR. Thanks to her quick response and ability to manage a crisis, Lane made a full recovery. His family is forever grateful.

Amber is a lot of things. To these guys she is figuratively and literally a life saver.



Celebrating Our Long-term Team

For people with disabilities, success is often determined by highly-influential, skilled people who help them navigate all aspects of their life—Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).

DSPs are the backbone of our industry. They provide assistance with basic tasks such as hygiene and medication, and more importantly, they are relationship builders who connect people to volunteer opportunities, jobs, friends, religious groups, and to community involvement.

We understand how highly disruptive it can be to the people we support and their families when people leave. Losing the backbone of support, even with a supportive family can bring a standstill to everyday life.

DSP wages don't always align with the value DSPs provide and this industry experiences a high turnover rate. DSP wages are determined based on Medicaid funding and funding from the Minnesota legislature. Due to this funding model, retail salespeople and fast food employees are often paid several dollars per hour more than DSPs.

Here at CCRI, we are fortunate to have an amazing team who are champions for the people they support. In an industry with a turnover rate of more than 50%, we are happy to say we are below that. We are grateful for those team members who are committed to those they support.

We are excited to celebrate 70 of our team members who have been with CCRI for 10 or more years. Their commitment to those we serve is impressive and something worth celebrating!

Name	Years Employed	Name	Years	Name	Years	Name	Years
Jody Hudson	20	Ashley Tweten	15	Janet Harles	11		
Rachelle Staton	20	Rebecca Gustofson	15	Kayla Flach	11		
Jennifer Behrens	34	Andrea Pollock	15	Melanie Odegaard	11		
Bethany Dykema	30	Greta Marie Miller	14	Tara Haugen	11		
Dianne Sanden	29	Susan Langerud	14	Molly Jang	11		
Julie Hanson	28	Dennis Behl	18	Ashley Lewis	14	Kyle Jameson	11
Lynette Weber	28	Jean Johnson-Thorson	18	Anna Larson	13	Patricia Pemble	11
Shannon Bock	25	Andrea Iverson	17	Kent Schultz	13	Candi Dunham	10
Marielle Clark	24	Allen Jang	17	Natalie Pieper	13	Jamie Spooner	10
Karen Reichel	24	Nicole Carlson	17	Jessalyn Mischel	13	Jason Austinson	10
Dee Krumwiede	23	Cristela Ramirez	17	Kelly Thorne	13	Dana Pausch	10
Jennifer Gunderson	23	Curtis Fadness	17	Mary Cummins	12	Lisa Behl	10
Monica Nielson	23	Kathleen Kirkeby	17	Corrine Lidenberg	12	Rita Lizakowski	10
Tyler Kloster	22	Linda Bowie	16	Sheila Berger	12	Nicole Atherton	10
Korene Moore	22	Patricia Ketterl	16	Angela Linden	12	Ahmed Mohamed	10
Holli Brager	21	Tara Selzler	16	Brandy Strand	12	Melanie Eidsmoe	10
Eric Hilber	21	Rachel Gustofson	15	Sharon Christensen-Clark	12	Ingrid Hagstrom	10
David Pompe	20	Vicki Cusey	15	Wayne Zitzow	11	Stephanie Moug	10

The Hottest Fundraiser Of The Year



Jade Presents, Fargo Brewing Company, and CCRI teamed up for the hottest fundraiser of the year—the Hot Sauce Challenge! We are grateful for the eight brave souls who gathered during the Dia Del Taco Fest and ate five mini tacos with progressively hotter sauces on them.



The more money they raised for CCRI, the more tools (like milk and ice cream) they got to help with the challenge. A collective \$2,800 was raised to provide life-changing technology to the people we support.





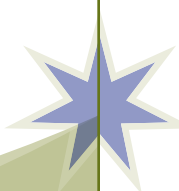
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The mission of CCRI is to enhance and enrich the lives and learning of people with disabilities.

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



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TABLESCAPES

The Technology of Dining

Tuesday, October 8, 2019, 5:30–8 P.M.

Courtyard by Marriott
1080 28th Avenue South, Moorhead

For ticket information, contact Anna at
ALarson@CreativeCare.org
or 218-331-2036

CCRIMoorhead.org