



#Build4TheGuys

Written by Amber Lobdell

I have to admit, before I started working at CCRI six years ago, I didn't know what to expect. The words "group home" made me think of a quiet, clinical setting—something similar to a nursing home.

When I met Lane, David, Brad, and Greg, my preconceived ideas about a group home went out the window. It's not quiet and the guys have busier social lives than I do. I was also wrong that it would feel clinical, because going to see these guys feels like my second home. It's not a group home, it's just home.

If you are feeling empty, spend a little time with these four and they will fill you up. They will warm with their honesty, hilarity, laughter, pure authenticity, and knack for making connections with anyone who walks through their door. I think this is why the guys collectively have so many fans and lifelong friends.

Over the years there have been a lot of big, exciting things that have happened with the guys. I could share lots of stories of camp, prom, art shows, 5Ks—all the big events. But instead I will share what one day in the life of Lane, David, Brad, and Greg is like, because working with them has taught me how to be fully present and how to appreciate the little things. I have never met anyone else who can make the ordinary so extraordinary.

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family together.*



So here we go, a typical Friday in September at the guys' home.

I wish I could greet all of you like Brad greeted me. Brad had recently arrived home from his day program and instead of having a snack he rolled his wheelchair outside so he could greet me. Brad greeting his caregivers this way has become so common for the last six years that I forget sometimes how much it means to me. Brad loves so much that he waits outside for you. His heart is so big it can't be contained to the four walls of his home. And when he saw my car, he began scooting closer to me with arms extended above his head giving his trademark "thumbs up." He is the only person who greets me with this much excitement—my husband, mom and kids have not followed suit.

Continued on next page.

As Brad and I walk inside the home, Dave springs up to remind me it's toy day. David counts down on the calendar to his designated "toy shopping" trips. He talks about buying toys every single day. Dave sits down to color and create so he can keep busy and contain his excitement before we leave.



Then Greg asks if I will give him a haircut, which reminds Brad that he wants one too. Somehow we have started a ritual of shaving both their heads. Every single day. I think it's less about hair removal and more about the connecting and relaxing. I lather Greg's head up with too much shaving cream. As the shaving cream comes out the can shoots out some air making a "pffft" sound. Of course Lane has to jump in and ask "Amber, was that you?" his voice trying hard to hold back laughter. David laughs and exclaims "Amber, it was you. Amber stinks." Greg joins in "Gross, Amber." The teasing continues, the shaving cream flatulence blame being passed around. When Greg and Brad's heads both are shiny and smooth, we have to apply lotions like we are at a fancy barber shop.

Next, we stop by the bank to get some cash. David has toys to buy and every Friday the guys take turns choosing where we go out to eat—because they want to go together. This time it's Lane's choice, Kroll's Diner. Lane is now singing Beach Boys at the top of his lungs and calls Kroll's a "good-time oldies diner".

We quickly pick up a Happy Meal for David because the more My Little Pony toys he can get, the better, and then head to the thrift store. If you want to know what pure, intense joy looks like...go to a toy store with David. David's brow was sweating with excitement as he found a toy house, an orange bird cage, and a chalkboard. Brad finds a book, and the brightest orange hat and hoodie ensemble to wear to dinner to get into the Halloween spirit.

At Kroll's, Lane blows his straw wrapper into my coworker's face. Brad is negotiating how many Diet Coke refills he can get, Greg is sipping his coffee, David is holding his My Little Pony and saying "the coolest thing." We eat around the table like one big, hilarious, loving family, Brad confidently sporting his new hat and sweatshirt as they illuminate the whole restaurant.



After we go out to eat on Friday, Greg will ALWAYS want to go to the dance at the activity center. While Greg can be more reserved at home, on the dance floor his moves are anything but reserved.

We often stand slightly apart from each other, copying each other's moves.

Lane will often rush to his room to do his financials with his calculator and paste his receipts into his own financial book.



Dave will usually take this time to take advantage of Greg and Brad being at the dance and have a nice long bubble bath. David never stops talking at home and it's one of my favorite things. In the bath you can hear him saying "hi bubbles..." to his bubble bath and making up bath-related puns. And when he gets dressed he often has the best positive self talk: "David that shirt looks beautiful on you. That color really shows up."

Greg showers and unwinds watching Little House on the Prairie. When he finally submits to tiredness, Greg smiles mischievously as I turn off his light and says, "good night, Jean." Then starts laughing. "My name

is not Jean!" I protest, which elicits even more laughter. Lane is in the hallway and says, "no, her name is Eugene." "It is not!! It's Amber!!!" I repeat. More chuckling behind Greg's closed door.

As the guys were winding down, Brad asked if I could help him get tucked in. I helped him straighten out all three of his blankets, say good-night and as I start to leave the room, Brad tells me "you are one of my angels."

Their mornings have the usual busyness that is relatable to everyone. There are the early risers and the one that needs coffee and the promise of pancakes to get out of bed. There is the packing of the lunches and the everyone-needing-the-same-bathroom-at-the-same-time all the while gently reminding David that his roommates might take his teasing and singing that they're funny-lookin' to the tune of Jingle Bells better when they have had a chance to wake up! We have side-splitting laughter when the pancake batter-coated whisk fell and splattered my legs. And we play songs on my phone for us to sing along to while we wait for the bus to take them to their workplaces or day programs. I then watch them ride away on the bus to go warm more hearts.

My days with the guys have become a big quilt of little, beautiful, extraordinary, ordinary



moments all sewn together. They're a big warm quilt, that feels like home. No matter if I was feeling pessimistic about the world or worried about a problem before work, when I leave my shift with the guys, I'm always talkative, energized and happy. My cup is full.

Lane, David, Brad, and Greg you are anything but ordinary, you warm so many hearts, you change lives. I love you four, and no one deserves this beautiful new house as much as the four of you.





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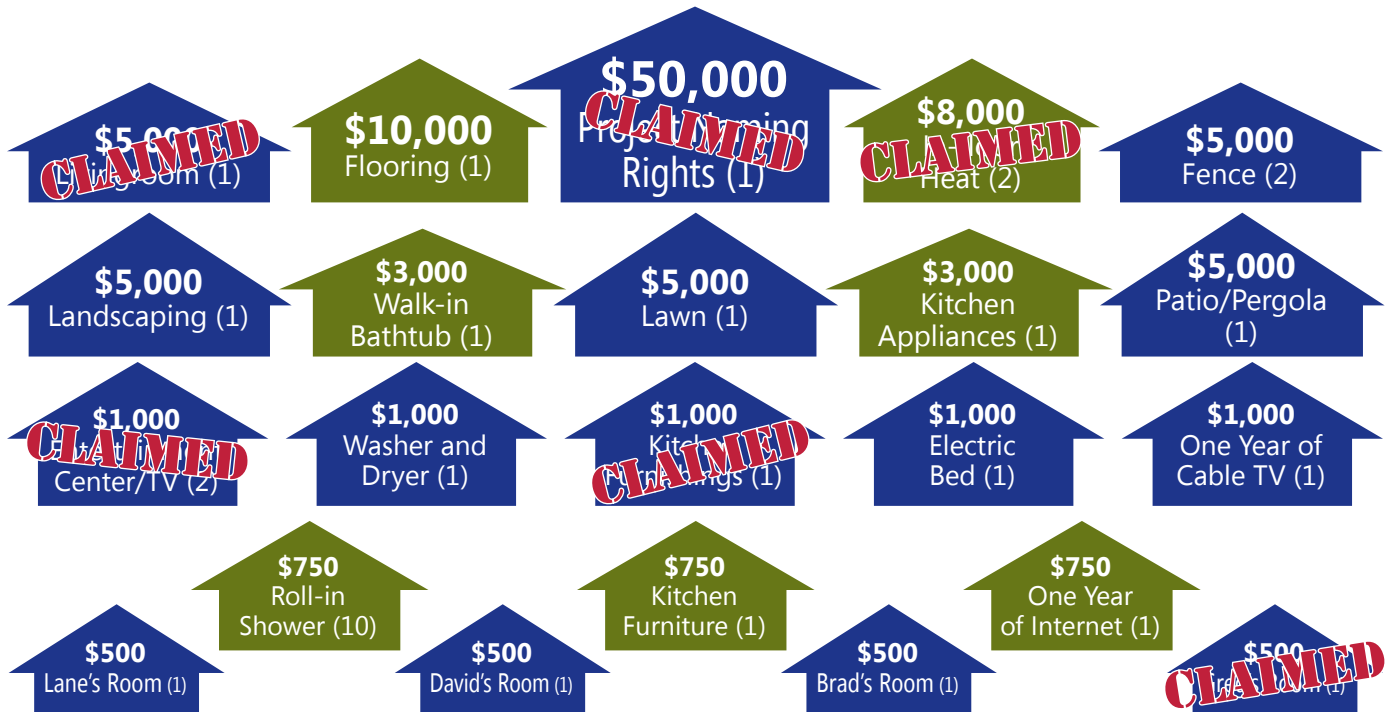
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The vision of CCRI is to provide an environment where people of all abilities may experience life's possibilities.

Join us as we **#Build4TheGuys**.

Together, let's build a home where they can spend the rest of their days in a comfortable and accessible place.



Check out more opportunities for the guys on our Target registry.