


## *Red Flags* by Amber Lobdell



I'm picturing one of those posters on the ceilings at the dentist with somebody on the moon with text that says something like, "perspective is everything." I always thought those philosophical posters had no place at the dentist; when there's a drill in my mouth my perspective is limited to "there's a drill in my mouth and I'm sweating." Or when I see the posters with a photo of a beach with some cutesy quote, I'm thinking "it must be nice for you to be there, I can't feel my face and I just bit my lip but I can only tell because I'm bleeding." I think I digressed a little there....

I have a daughter. Her name is Ruby. She is almost three years old and the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. She has the sweetest little curls and blue eyes with flecks of gold in them. I used to imagine what she'd be like when I was pregnant with her. I have to admit I had some stereotypical ideas of what my little girl would be like, and once she was here she was nothing like that little girl in my mind. I often tell my husband, "She is so much better than I could have ever imagined."

### *Changing Perspectives*

My perspective of her shifted when she went to bed with a foam number 9 instead of a teddy bear. It shifted when she threw her doll in the garbage and then spent time figuring out the mechanics of the baby gate. She isn't likely to ask for help, she is a problem solver.



She is pretty concrete when it comes to numbers or letters. But she is also creative; cups become shoes, plates become clocks, pants become hats. It became apparent in the last year that she was falling behind her peers with language. She had yet to put words together. We started Early Intervention and on the first screening I excitedly told the team all of these things I love so much about Ruby. I told them with so much pride about Ruby counting backwards and forwards, her natural knack for letters, her excitement about clocks. I told them how she isn't particularly into dolls and stuffed animals, I bragged about her "quirks" and how many times she makes me smile and laugh. I told them how brilliant she was.

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Later, we received a written assessment about Ruby and as I read it and scanned the words “red flags for Autism” and “delays in the following areas” and “falling below...” tears filled my eyes as I thought of all the things Ruby can’t do or won’t be able to do. That day, my perspective changed again. Instead of seeing a sky full of stars, I saw clouds. I saw things in Ruby I hadn’t given a second thought to before—like her hugging a clock but not her little brother. Or the time Ruby wouldn’t even turn to look when somebody got hurt and was crying, totally immersed in her own world. I started to compare her language with that of typically developing children. I even started to see her gifts as symptoms instead of, well, gifts. I think I said something to my husband along the lines of, “all of the things I bragged about...all my favorite traits about her were red flags for Autism.”

I hate that I said that now. As a parent the minute I read that paper my mind went to all of the things that could be hard. My mind became consumed with fears about her struggling in school, having crippling social anxiety, and difficulties in relationships and communication.

One day, totally out of the blue, Ruby just held the sides of my head in both hands and kissed my forehead. Strangely, that sent an emotional shock wave through me that changed my perspective again. I realized that I am her safe place, and she sees me as the one who makes things “all better.” The way I see her will impact how I go about raising her. If I nurture her abilities and give her patience and understanding through the hardships,

then I see her like I see outer space—brimming with unknown possibilities.

## *We are More Than Labels*

We are making wonderful connections and huge strides with her speech therapist and she is starting special ed preschool after her birthday. When she does something new like saying, “help, mama” when she needs me I get so darn excited. I can still wholeheartedly say she is so much more amazing than I ever imagined her to be. When I buy her pajamas with numbers on them, I see her face and my heart fills with joy. I am in awe when I watch Ruby solve a problem. After she goes to bed, I beam as I see the cups she wore as shoes earlier that day on the floor.

The reality is—you can’t imagine what a person will be before you meet them and you can’t imagine what someone will be based on a label or a diagnosis. People are so much more beautiful than that, and they deserve parents, caregivers, friends, and teachers who 100% believe they are capable, beautiful, and brilliant as they are. Perspective changes all of the time—at least for me—and it made



the biggest shift when I became a parent. I feel like now I’m just that tiny speck of a person on the moon and I’m looking into the unknown (which can’t fit on a poster at the dentist) and I’m releasing my preconceived ideas, knowing it’s going to be hard sometimes, but more meaningful and more amazing than I could ever imagine.

*Amber has been a CCRI caregiver for 5 years.*

## *A Red-hot Thank You.*

A Red-hot Thank You to Pat Lenertz and Christopher Larson for organizing the second annual Pepper Challenge—a true test of intestinal fortitude



benefiting the people supported by CCRI. Thank you also to Bottle Barn Liquors, Kilstone Brewing and Cass-Clay Creamery for their sponsorships.

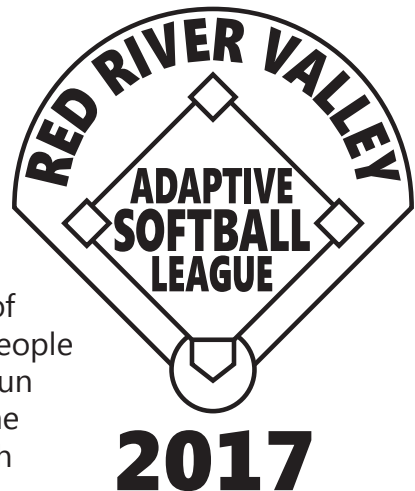


An additional thank you to these eight brave souls who ate a Carolina Reaper (2.2 million Scoville Heat Units [SHU], a jalapeño is 5,000 SHU for comparison) and lived to tell about it.

## *Adaptive Softball Is 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.



### ***Thanks to the following 2017 Sponsors:***

*Baer Poultry Farms • Bennett Houglum Agency • Bert's • Hawley Lions Club  
Rhonda & Jeff King • Red River Valley Softball Association • Valerie & Charles Rick  
Taxman • Todd's Alignment & Repair • Waxing the City*

# 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, we have been able to provide extraordinary moments at camp for more than 20 years.

Activities include horseback riding, waterfront activities, campfires and endless camp crafting.





## *There Is No Shortage of Talent Here.*

The CCRI Talent show was a huge success with more than 200 people in attendance. This CCRI-sponsored event provides an opportunity for creative expression for many of the people we support. It was incredible to see people of all abilities working alongside each other to deliver an amazing show!



The acts varied from heartfelt songs, to a Zumba routine, to animal impressions to a comedian who, with the aid of adaptive technology, caused the audience to laugh uncontrollably, and more! There were also some talented bakers, artists, and sport enthusiasts who proudly displayed their gifts.

The performers did a phenomenal job and the support they received from their caregivers was marvelous. The enthusiasm and commitment of all

our team members made the night a huge success.

We are grateful for generous donors whose support makes opportunities like this possible.



## Forty Fantastic Years.

2017 marks our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of providing person-centered opportunities to the people we support. This is a great milestone for everyone who has ever been involved with CCRI and we have been celebrating throughout the year.



work without people like you. Your gifts help support a lifetime of choices, respect and opportunity. It's only with you as our partner that we are able to do our work.

Your financial gift is vital for us to continue to provide personalized

CCRI would not exist without the vision, direction, and hard work of our founding families who decided to do something different 40 years ago. We are the beneficiaries of this vision and our team remains steadfast in acting as advocates for people who need our support and help.

care. It ensures people get the right support at the right time; they receive dedicated, skilled and compassionate caregivers, and live in a secure and accessible home in accepting neighborhoods.

We could not carry out our important

Together we form something that's unique, powerful, and that works. I am CCRI. You are CCRI. Together, we are CCRI.



Photos from CCRI's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Picnic.



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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.

## *RDO Caters Taters*

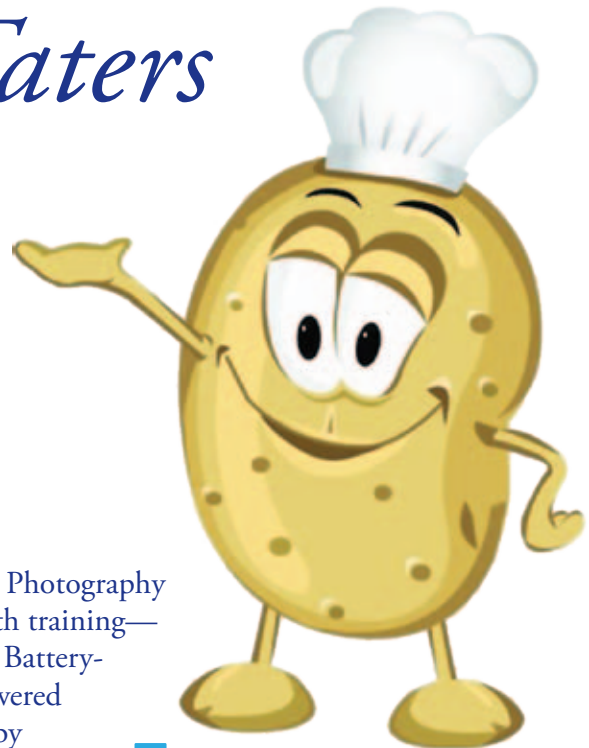
*Join us for some tongue tantalizing taters  
11 A.M. to 1 P.M., Tuesday, November 21  
at Delta Hotels by Marriott Fargo.*




The Caters Taters crew has been hard at work making sure this year's raffle is full of great prizes. Purchase your raffle tickets at CCRI.

**Grand Prize:** Samsung 65" Class LED 4K Smart TV  
(donated by Happy Harry's)

**Premier Prize:** Two round-trip airline tickets  
(donated by Travel Travel & Kvamme Travel)

**This year's other prizes include:** Portrait Session—Amara Lea Photography  
Scheels Gift Card—Scheels • Garmin Vivofit 3 and one month training—  
Pausch Chiropractic & Dynasty Performance Training • Stihl Battery-Powered Trimmer—RDO Equipment Co. • Stihl Battery-Powered Blower—RDO Equipment Co. • Bean Bag Boards—Boards by Dodge • Samsung Galaxy Tab A 16GB—Pro Landscapers, LLC • Shop ND package—ND "Home" Sign and \$100 Visa Gift Card—Grain Designs and Maring Willimas Law Office, P.C.



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