RAKING LIFE COLORFUL 2024 GRATITUDE REPORT

JOCCRI

Executive Director Message

Celebrating Our Success and Preparing for Challenges Ahead



We had a lot to celebrate in 2024. This past year marked 10 years in our current building. Before that, we operated out of a space that was so cramped that we had to set up someone's desk in a filing closet,

and we couldn't offer the inclusive, accessible programming that we do today. Our facility lets us offer everything from cooking, art, and music classes to karaoke, bingo, and dance parties. These activities teach life skills and offer opportunities for social connection, belonging and inclusion.

Thanks to the community's support, we opened another fully accessible home that meets the mobility needs of Joel, David, Buck, and Gary as they age and allows these four best friends to continue living together.

We've done a lot over the past ten years, and we certainly couldn't do it alone. We're so grateful for the outpouring of support you and the community give us every time we ask for help. And we're going to need your help going into 2025 more than ever.

Advocating for a Brighter Future

Minnesota's 2025 legislative session has begun, and as of the writing of this newsletter, the governor's proposed budget included significantly cutting disability waiver services. This is our primary source of funding. It's what allows us to provide the kind of care that helps people with disabilities live full, independent lives, and it's what allows us to hire the best staff.

The governor's proposal totals \$600 million **in cuts to disability waiver rates** over four years, taking away critical funding for direct support professional wages at a time when we already struggle to compete for staffing against fast-food restaurants and retail stores (jobs that don't come with the stress of having someone else's life in your hands). We need to make sure legislators understand the importance of disability waiver services and uphold the commitments the state already made to us.

CCRI does a great job advocating for our services and the folks we support:

- Each March, we take a bus of clients, staff, and families to St. Paul for Disability Services Day at the Capitol.
- We invite our local legislators to our events so they can get to know us, the folks we support, and the crucial work we do.
- We've hosted events to help legislators understand the challenges facing our industry.

When it comes to letter-writing, legislators have mentioned they've heard from CCRI supporters more than anyone in any other industry. It is imperative that we maintain that momentum this year, and to do that, we need your help.



Help Change the World in 5 Minutes or Less

Advocacy doesn't have to be time-consuming. You really can make an incredible difference for CCRI and the folks we support in five minutes or less.

Here's how:

 Scan this QR code to visit the ARRM Advocacy Center. ARRM is a nonprofit dedicated to the advancement of home and community-based services supporting people with disabilities.



 Scroll down to the "Active Action Alerts" section, and fill in your address to send a prewritten email asking our legislators to reject the governor's proposed cuts to disability waiver services.

Our voices need to be heard. Otherwise, our legislators will assume everything is okay. My voice is one voice. Between you and our staff, we could have thousands of voices advocating for disability services. Imagine the impact that could make.

The truth is, we are all just one accident or disease away from needing the kinds of services CCRI provides, so we have to make sure our crucial services continue. When you support us through donations, volunteering, advocacy, and telling other people about us and our mission, you are making our world a kinder, more inclusive place.

Thank you for being willing to make a difference for others.

Ahanna Bell

Shannon Bock Executive Director



Our Board of Directors and the Importance of Disability Services



"Every life is a gift and every individual is valuable. Everyone deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential." – James Nagle (5 years), president



"People with disabilities contribute to our community in every way. They live below the poverty level, yet many go to work and bring joy to co-workers and customers. Our support fills the gaps left by underfunded programs and allows them to thrive and enjoy a good life." – Jackie Beedy (2 years), vice president



"Supporting disability services is crucial because it fosters compassionate communities where all individuals can thrive and contribute meaningfully." – Heather Rye (7 years), secretary



"Everyone deserves to live full, vibrant, joyous lives. CCRI makes that happen for more than 450 people in our community, which is such important, meaningful work." – Carrie Carney (2 years), treasurer



"Supporting disability services is supporting individuals who need a little more assistance to live their best life. Every person is a living soul worthy of opportunities to create a more fulfilling life. With simple steps, more lives can be enriched." – Erin D. Larsgaard (6 years)



"People with disabilities are citizens of this state and country and should have the same rights as all of our citizens. They deserve a safe place to live, healthy food, to be a part of our community, to feel valued, to feel safe, and they deserve a 'colorful' life!" – Clare Garberg (4 years)



"Supporting disability services really boils down to supporting people. When we support individuals with disabilities, we are supporting them, their families, their friends and the entire Fargo-Moorhead area. It's about creating a community where everyone is empowered, valued and included." – Tyler Fischbach (4 years)



"Everyone should have the right to equal opportunities to succeed in their life and to improve the quality of their life, however they define it. We all want to feel a part of our community. Inclusion and independence help those with disabilities to belong and live their best life." – Diane Brendemuhl (3 years)



"Supporting disability services ensures equity and accessibility, breaking down barriers that hinder individuals from living fulfilling lives. Investing in disability services promotes a more inclusive society where everyone's unique contributions are valued. Communities are strengthened by embracing diversity and collaboration." – Kate Cook (3 years)



"I love supporting and sitting on the board for CCRI because of all the work they do to ensure people with disabilities have equal opportunities, promote independence, and constantly working to improve their quality of life. CCRI plays a key role in creating an inclusive and thriving community for all." – Amanda Linder (1 year)



"I feel it is important to support disability services in our community to help promote confidence and independence in individuals who might not otherwise have that opportunity." – Hollie McClean (newly elected)



"Just because people have disabilities does not mean they are unable to contribute or be independent. Society limits them more than their disability does. CCRI fills a critical role in our community, and I'm very proud to be a part of it." – Natalie Probasco (newly elected)

Our Employees are Dedicated to CCRI

While the average retention rate for people working in human services is around 40%, CCRI is proud of our 57.3% DSP retention rate and 61.9% overall retention rate (including DSPs and administrative staff).

Team Member Milestones

CCRI employs 500 people, and the following team members have been with us for 15 years or more:

Jennifer Behrens, Direct Support Professional (39) Bethany Dykema, Direct Support Professional (34) Julie Hanson, Direct Support Professional (33) Marielle Clark, Direct Support Professional (29) Karen Reichel, Direct Support Professional (29) Dee Krumwiede, Residential Coordinator (28) Jennifer Gunderson, Direct Support Professional (28) Monica Nielson, Direct Support Professional (28) Tyler Kloster, Direct Support Professional (27) Korene Moore, Direct Support Professional (27) Holli Brager, Direct Support Professional (26) Rachelle Staton, Medical Assistant (25) Amber Vallera, Direct Support Professional (24) Dennis Behl, Direct Support Professional (23) Jean Johnson-Thorson, Direct Support Professional (23) Andrea Iverson, Direct Support Professional (22) Allen Jang, Direct Support Professional (22) Nicole Carlson, Direct Support Professional (22) Tara Dykema, Direct Support Professional (21) Jessica Krabbenhoft, Scheduling Coordinator (20) Rachel Gustofson, Human Resources Talent Specialist (20) Rebecca Gustofson, Direct Support Professional (20) Ashley Tweten, Supportive Housing Specialist (20) Andrea Pollock, Direct Support Professional (20)

Susan Langerud, Direct Support Professional (19) Greta Marie Miller, Direct Support Professional (19) Lisa Behl, Direct Support Professional (19) Natalie Pieper, Human Resources Generalist (18) Kelly Thorne, Billing Supervisor (18) Angela Linden, Direct Support Professional (18) Sheila Berger, Direct Support Professional (17) Brandy Strand, Residential Coordinator (17) Sharon Christensen-Clark, Direct Support Professional (17) Ryan Linden, Accounting Specialist (17) Kayla Flach, Direct Support Professional (16) Tara Haugen, Direct Support Professional (16) Melanie Odegaard, Direct Support Professional (16) Molly Jang, Direct Support Professional (16) Patricia Pemble, Supportive Housing Specialist (16) Kevin Bartel, Office Maintenance (16) Candi Dunham, Direct Support Professional (15) Jamie Spooner, Direct Support Professional (15) Jason Austinson, Direct Support Professional (15) Dana Pausch, Direct Support Professional (15) Rita Lizakowski, Direct Support Professional (15) Ahmed Mohamed, Direct Support Professional (15) Ingrid Hagstrom, Direct Support Professional (15) Stephanie Moug, Direct Support Professional (15)

CCRI Directors

With an average tenure of 16 years, our core management team is dedicated to CCRI's success.

Lynette Weber, Options Director (33) Shannon Bock, Executive Director (30) Eric Hilber, SLS Director (26) Dave Pompe, IT Director (25) Melanie Eidsmoe, SLS Assistant Director (16)

Tamara Peters, IBD Director (12)
Shelly Thompson, Human Resources Director (9)
Zach Sandbakken, SLS Assistant Director (6)
Jennifer Brandt, Finance Director (5)
Tracy Frank, Development & Communications Director (2)

Finding Peace Through Music



John, a CCRI client, was struggling. He isn't very verbal, so communication can be difficult, and he'd have anywhere from 10–15 setbacks a month.

When he gets to spend time with others, John thrives, but he doesn't do well in loud, overstimulating environments. And while John has always loved music (especially 1980s rock and playing the keyboard in his room), he gets too overwhelmed to participate in the adaptive music class held at CCRI each month. Still, John's parents wondered if music therapy might be an option for him. Always open to new opportunities for the folks we support, our staff

looked into music therapy options and found a local provider who was willing to see John.

The first time John met Emily, a board-certified music therapist with Music Therapy in Motion, she sang him a hello song, he started to clap and tap his feet. When their session was over an hour later and Emily started putting her instruments away, John took them back out. He wasn't ready for his session to end.

Doing one-on-one music therapy has changed John's life. Our staff has been taking him to music therapy twice a week and his setbacks have decreased to maybe one a month! In addition, over the past few years, John had been isolating himself more and more. He now gets excited to go see Emily.

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"This has been a beautiful way for John to express his emotions," said Angela Linden, John's direct support professional.

Gracie Hennen, John's Supported Living Services (SLS) residential coordinator, added: "We're very thankful he found music therapy."

John can match beat, pitch, and tone and is able to feel music in a special way. Gracie mentioned that his therapist has even said he's one of the most musically talented people she's seen in the disability world.

> In a video of one of his sessions, John was strumming the guitar while Emily sang "You Are My Sunshine." When she got to the part of the song that goes, "you'll never know dear, how much I ...," she stopped singing, and John sang the

words "love you." It was so beautiful, it brought many of our staff members to tears.

Supported Living Services is CCRI's 24-hour care program that helps people of all ages with disabilities who need around-the-clock assistance.

Achieving a 12-Year Dream

In 2024 Kate, a CCRI client, made her 12-year dream come true.

"CCRI has been the best thing that has ever happened to me," she said.

At CCRI, we strive to help the amazing individuals we support live their most fulfilling, colorful, and independent lives. However, the way that looks can differ greatly from person to person. From medical and physical needs to the goals and dreams of the people we support, a lot of factors play a part in helping our clients create a life they don't just live, but love. That is why we offer many different programs that allow us to tailor our services to fit the needs of the people we support, all while helping them grow independence to close the gap between those needs and their dreams in life.

For Kate, that dream was to finally live with the love of her life and fiancé, Chris.

Kate started her journey with CCRI in 2003 through Supported Living Services, our 24-hour care program. Yet she's wanted to move into our Independent by Design (IBD) program since it launched in 2012. So, Kate began working with her CCRI team to grow her skills and independence. But growth doesn't happen overnight.

As she was working on herself, Kate met Chris at a social skills club.

"We hated each other when we first met," she explains, chuckling as she recalls how their relationship was a slow burn that grew from friendship.

> 2024 marked their 10-year anniversary, which they celebrated by taking a huge step forward together.

With her team's support, Kate transitioned into CCRI's IBD program and was able to move in with her fiancé. A dream that she once thought unattainable, that changed as her life did, and that she worked toward for more than 12 years, finally became her reality.

"It's been phenomenal," Kate exclaims of the change. "I get to see Chris every day now."

Independent by Design is a CCRI program that uses sensors and other technology along with some staff assistance to help people with disabilities live independently while maintaining their safety and getting the support they need to meet their goals.

How Teamwork and Patience Led to Stability and Independence

A little more than two years ago, Jeanette was referred to CCRI's aftercare services in our mental health program. She struggled with auditory hallucinations, paranoia, and other medical and mental health issues that had not been addressed.

Aftercare is a service of CCRI's mental health program that provides intensive, short-term psychiatric stabilization and case management support and is available to adults who have a serious or serious and persistent mental illness who need help beyond what other mental health services provide.

19 Stan Bernard States in



Trusting others wasn't something that came easily to Jeanette, so when Jonathon Dullea, a CCRI mental health nurse, started working with her, that was the first thing he worked to establish. Along the way,

he also helped her apply for county benefits and schedule medical and mental health appointments.

Over the next couple of years, Jonathon continued to work with Jeanette on ways to help her set herself up for success—even when she struggled to see what that could look like. He and others on CCRI's mental health team continued to work with Jeanette on finding and using community resources like food banks and thrift stores, while keeping and following through on her medical and mental health appointments.

Now, Jeanette has kept a job for more than a year, she's rebuilding her credit, and she's participating in a homebuyer savings program. With CCRI's help, Jeanette continues to break down barriers and live her fullest life. In addition to mental health services, Jeanette uses our Independent by Design and Housing Stabilization Services to help her maintain housing while living as independently as possible.



"Looking back at where Jeanette was at the end of 2022 has shown just how important it was for her recovery to be placed with a flexible, fast, and knowledgeable aftercare team at CCRI," says Julia Dwyer, CCRI's mental health program

supervisor. "Her journey has been filled with ups and downs, as is to be expected, but she continues to move forward and work toward recovery. Jeanette is a reminder that it's okay to ask for help, and flexibility is key when starting mental health recovery."

Our **Mental Health Services** help people with a serious or serious and persistent mental illness manage their mental health so they can live the life they want to live.

Housing Stabilization Services help people with disabilities, mental illness, and substance use find and keep housing.

"I haven't done this well in a very long time. I really have come so far—I'm proud of myself."

- Jeanette, CCRI Mental Health, Independent by Design, and Housing Stabilization Services Client

Clients Learn New Ways to Reach Independence

In less than two years, CCRI's Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program has grown exponentially. It started in the summer of 2023 with three employees and six clients. We now have seven full- and part-time team members supporting 25 clients, and we're continually receiving new referrals.

By using functional behavioral assessment tools, team members create positive behavior plans, which help train staff and family members on how to help the person implement their new strategies.

"PBS team members spend a lot of time helping clients learn how to build good habits and replace challenging responses with more positive alternatives," said Melanie Eidsmoe, SLS assistant director, who heads our PBS program.

Here are a few ways this program has helped the folks we support:

- Bryan, who struggled to come to terms with his disability, has been able to achieve his goal of sharing his story publicly by speaking in front of a large group of people.
- Shawn, who used to struggle to wash just a few dishes, now visits while doing his dishes without arguing about why he can't.
- Ethan, who struggled with authority and social interactions, now participates in CCRI activities and enjoys having adventures with his staff.

CCRI's **Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Services** are designed to promote positive change, independence, and an improved quality of life for people with disabilities by addressing challenging behaviors through person-centered strategies.



2024 Event Sponsors

There is no way we could have the impact we do without the support of our business community. By supporting CCRI throughout the year, the following businesses and service groups helped people with disabilities live a more meaningful life and experience being part of the community:

Friend of CCRI Major Sponsor	Block Party
Bremer Bank	Christensen Group Insurance
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Sound Engagement

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2024 Donations Made in Honor or Memory of Someone Else

Donating to CCRI in someone else's name is a meaningful way to recognize them or honor their legacy. The following gifts were given in honor or in memory of someone else:



Michael & Carol Hermanson In Memory of Gary Hermanson

> Kim Veen In Memory of Nancy Jacobson

Char Parker In Memory of Laura Johnson

Karen Skarpness In Memory of my friend, LaVerne Johnson

Katherine Curren, and Julie Larson In Memory of Lane Larson

> Patricia & Tom Boyer In Memory of Betty Lerfald

Essentia Health NICU, Eva & Dean Fercho, and Phyllis Huber Gehring In Memory of Ardella Moeckel

Mary Ann Nord, and Lois & Raphael Riedman In Memory of Teresa Nord Anonymous, Michael & Nicole Bednar, HCI, Carol Matthes, and David McLaughlin In Memory of Mel Nygaard

> Doug & Jo Sorenson In Memory of Brenda Oistad

Josh & Elizabeth Swanson, and Justin Swanson In Memory of Cliff & Ruth Olson

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James & Susan Lopez In Memory of Barbara Weir

Sheri Miller, and Deanna & James Zeller In Memory of Brenda Zeller

In Honor

Kurtis & Patricia Ketterl In Honor of All My Past CCRI Clients

> Gary Larson In Honor of Kim & Ira Bailey

Anonymous In Honor of Quinn Bang & Payton Bang

David & Debra Benson In Honor of Mitchell Benson

Greg & Connie Forbord In Honor of Blair

> Kimberly Pladson In Honor of Shannon Bock

Richard & Shirley Bolme In Honor of Meghan Bolme

Gerald & Nora Koenig In Honor of Buck, Joel, Gary, & David

> Pamela Cannizzaro In Honor of Alex Cannizzaro

Fabricators Unlimited In Honor of CCRI Team

> Danet Erickson In Honor of Dale & Travis

Wayne & Diane Brendemuhl In Honor of Dan the Man!

> Pam Gibb In Honor of Tracy Frank

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Terry & Carlotta Spelhaug In Honor of Taya Spelhaug

Douglas & Kathleen Twite In Honor of Trisha Twite & Tamara Peters

> Steve & Connie Lerew In Honor of Gary Wiger

Volunteers Make a Difference for CCRI



Lily, a sophomore at NDSU, started volunteering with CCRI in 2024 to fulfill a requirement for her social work program. What started as a school requirement grew into so much more as she met the incredible people we support.

"There is a stigma that people with disabilities live in grief or are sad," Lily said in an interview with The Forum regarding the positive impact volunteering with CCRI has had on her.

"There is so much joy here and so much laughter that has been really, really good for me just to be around."

Lily has volunteered with our life enrichment activities, fundraising events, and even used her skills as a nail artist to offer free manicures for the people we support.

Lily's experience is one shared by many of our volunteers, showcasing the

positive impact they have on our clients is matched by the positive impact our clients have on them.

In 2024, 435 passionate volunteers experienced that impact through donating 1,803 hours of their time helping the amazing people we support live their most fulfilling, independent, and colorful lives.

Thanks to their dedication and generosity, our monthly life enrichment clubs and activities were all made possible. From our prom and candy crawl to our adaptive cooking, art, music, karaoke, bingo and much, much more, volunteers like Lily helped our clients build relationships, skills, and the confidence to not just live, but live a life they love. Going above and beyond, our volunteers also thought outside of the box to create their own unique ways to connect with our clients by doing things like beginning a D&D club and offering nail appointments for those we support.

As we continue to look back at the positive impact our volunteers made possible in 2024, the tremendous success of our fundraising events becomes a testament to that very impact. Donating countless hours to our events, volunteers have played a large part in those successes, creating life-changing opportunities of growth for the amazing people we support.

Time and time again, our volunteers have shown their love for our organization, our mission, and ultimately the amazing people we support through their dedication for and willingness to donate

> their time to make a better, more inclusive community. We are so grateful for the individuals, groups, clubs, and businesses that chose to make a difference for individuals with disabilities in our community in 2024 through volunteering with us at CCRI.

Do you want to be a part of that difference? From our life

enrichment clubs and activities, to our community and fundraising events, CCRI has many diverse volunteer opportunities for both groups and individuals. If you would like to be a part of the positive change happening in our community, please visit our website, <u>CCRImoorhead.com</u>, to begin your volunteer journey today!

Questions? Email Kimmie McGuire, Special Events and Volunteer Manager, at <u>Kimberly.McGuire@</u> <u>CreativeCare.org</u>.

2024 By the Numbers



Mental Health Clients



Housing Support Services Clients



Independent by Design Clients



Life Enrichment Activities



Positive Behavior Support Clients





Donors & Partners

Thank you for your generosity in enhancing and enriching the lives and learning of people with disabilities.

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