

REACHING INDEPENDENCE

Home—and Independence—Reimagined

Hannah Papenfuss is a bright, thoughtful, and determined young woman. She's passionate about disability advocacy and loves connecting with people. Like many others with complex physical needs, Hannah dreams of a life that offers both independence and community. But the right kind of housing—one that's fully accessible, supportive, and socially fulfilling—is rare.

That's about to change.

CCRI is launching an innovative project to build a custom-designed, technology-enabled accessible twin home in Moorhead. One half of this home will provide people like Hannah the opportunity to live independently—supported by smart technologies and thoughtful design. The other half will house CCRI's Independent by Design (IBD) office, bringing staff closer to the more than 40 folks we support through the program and creating new possibilities for support.

"Disability is not the tragedy everyone makes it out to be," Hannah says. "But there are definitely barriers that you have to deal with that other people don't, and it makes your life more complicated."

This home is designed to remove some of those complications with:

- Barrier-free living spaces for maximum mobility.
- Voice-controlled assistants, automated doors, and smart sensors to promote independence.
- Medication minders and alert pendants to enhance safety.
- Custom support provided by CCRI's IBD team—only steps away.

More than a house, this home is a new model for how we support adults with physical and medical needs who are fully capable of directing their own lives. It's a place where connection, choice, and independence come first.



IN THIS TOGETHER

Casino Night Fundraiser—a Post-Prom Party with a Purpose

Every year, CCRI's prom night creates unforgettable memories for the folks we support—people with disabilities who deserve the same milestones and celebrations as anyone else. This fall, we're keeping the celebration going with a night that's just as meaningful—our Casino Night Fundraiser, a post-prom-style evening of fun, food, and giving back.

This event isn't just about raising funds—it's also about raising awareness, building community, and showing up for our neighbors. When you walk through the doors of the Avalon Events Center on Thursday, October 9, you're helping open doors for others: to independence, inclusion, and possibility.

This unforgettable evening, which replaces our TableScapes fundraiser, features:

- ♣ Casino and carnival games.
- ♣ A delicious pasta bar.
- ♣ A silent auction and raffles.

The dollars raised at Casino Night will support our Home, Reimagined project. Every ticket purchased, every donation made, and every raffle entered will bring us one step closer to a more accessible, more inclusive community.



Make Memories, and a Difference

- ♠ Avalon Events Center, 2525 9th Ave. S., Fargo
- ♥ Thursday, October 9 | 5:30–9 P.M.
- ♣ Tickets: \$75

Let's build a brighter future—together. Tickets are available now at: <https://ccrimoorhead.ejoinme.org/MyEvents/2025PostProm> or by scanning the QR code to the left.

Bring your friends and be part of something life-changing!



CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

Celebrating the People Powering Possibility: Our 2025 Champions of Change

We're honored to have so many friends and supporters who are—and have been—instrumental in helping us fulfill our mission to help people with disabilities live full, independent lives.

During our casino night post-prom fundraiser, we're recognizing two of our champions for going above and beyond in their service to CCRI.

Mark Knutson is our Individual Champion of Change.

Mark's unwavering dedication, energy, and heart for people with disabilities have made a lasting impact on our organization and the folks we support. From making sure our clients had the shoes they needed to maintain an active lifestyle to giving us free entry to the Fargo Marathon 5K, Mark helped raise both awareness and critical support for inclusive programs that empower individuals with disabilities to thrive. Participating in the Fargo Marathon 5K gives our clients a powerful sense of inclusion, accomplishment, and joy, whether they're high-fiving strangers as they push past mile three or leaving their wheelchairs to walk across the finish line. Mark's ability to bring people together and inspire action truly embodies the spirit of meaningful change. We are grateful for Mark's partnership, friendship, and the difference he continues to make—even after his death—in countless lives.



Total Balance Physical Therapy & Fitness is our Business Champion of Change.

Through their compassionate care and commitment to holistic wellness, Alex Wohl and the team at Total Balance have had a profound impact on the folks we support. By providing adaptive physical therapy services tailored to individuals with disabilities, Total Balance helps our clients build strength, confidence, and independence, while increasing mobility and reducing pain. Their inclusive approach, genuine kindness, and commitment to treating each person with respect and compassion, create a space where every person feels valued, respected, and empowered. We are grateful for the healing impact they bring to our community and the difference they make every day through their support, expertise, and belief in the potential of every person.

Help us celebrate these incredible Champions of Change at our Casino Night fundraiser!

CREATIVE CARE

CCRI Team Members Nominated for ARRM Cares Award

We're thrilled to share that three of our incredible team members are finalists for the ARRM Cares Award! We're so proud of our finalists and all 12 of the outstanding CCRI direct support professionals (DSPs) who were nominated for the prestigious ARRM Cares Award, recognizing their exceptional dedication, compassion, and creativity in supporting people with disabilities.

Our ARRM Cares finalists are Julie Hanson, Marielle Clark, and Bonnie Jenson—who was named a Rising Star finalist.



Julie Hanson, 34 years of service

Throughout her time at CCRI, Julie has been a steady, compassionate presence, providing exceptional care rooted in dignity and connection. Her integrity shines in everything she does—from end-of-life support to daily routines—always putting others first. Julie's calm consistency builds trust, and she trains new staff not just in skills, but in compassion. Whether organizing a road trip to reunite a client with his mother or empowering someone through shared cooking, Julie meets every person where they are. Her deep relationships, thoughtful advocacy, and creative, person-centered care have made her an irreplaceable part of countless lives.



Marielle Clark, 30 years of service

Marielle Clark embodies what it means to be a dedicated, compassionate DSP. What started as a part-time job grew into a lifelong calling. Marielle builds deep, lasting connections with the people she supports—empowering independence, encouraging relationships, and celebrating every milestone. From helping a client fulfill her dream of living with her fiancé to supporting another through a cancer diagnosis, Marielle's care goes far beyond the everyday. Her creativity, consistency, and person-centered approach make each day brighter. For Marielle, this work isn't a job—it's a purpose, and her impact is truly immeasurable.



Bonnie Jenson, 2 years of service

In her time as a CCRI DSP, Bonnie Jenson has gone above and beyond to provide thoughtful, person-centered care. She learned sign language on her own to better support nonverbal clients and once noticed subtle health changes that led to a life-saving diagnosis. Bonnie builds strong relationships with both clients and families, earning their trust through empathy, attentiveness, and genuine connection. Whether turning chores into dance parties or empowering clients through small wins, her creativity and compassion make every moment count. Bonnie's presence helps individuals feel empowered and parents feel supported. And she says building great relationships with her clients and their parents is why she likes working as a DSP.

"What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for each other?"

— George Eliot, Novelist

In our last newsletter, we shared stories of six of our nominees. In addition to our three finalists, here are the remaining three nominees. All 12 of CCRI's ARRM Cares nominees will be recognized during our employee appreciation party on September 11.

Jennifer Behrens, 40 years of service

With four decades of service, Jennifer Behrens is the heart of her home—ensuring daily needs are met with care, consistency, and attention to detail. From grocery shopping and meal prep to managing appointments, she keeps everything running smoothly. Jennifer plans meaningful experiences like ballgames, casino trips, and cruises, and serves as a steady, calming presence for clients with memory loss. She also leads financial, dietary, medical, and leisure efforts in the home. Her deep knowledge, compassion, and commitment to person-centered care have made her an invaluable support and a trusted partner to clients, families, and co-workers alike.



Lindsay Schock, 2 years of service

With a background in education, Lindsay found her true calling supporting adults with disabilities. She's trained in two homes and often works long hours—driven by passion, not obligation. Lindsay brings structure, empathy, and humor to every shift, helping clients build life skills, boost independence, and reach personal goals. Whether dancing in the car on the way to the dentist, turning chores into celebrations, or reframing hygiene routines with playful encouragement, her creative, person-centered approach fosters trust and growth. She says the little wins—like trying a new veggie or regulating emotions—make it all worth it.



Kurt Mesford-Lesmeister, 2 years of service

In his time with CCRI, Kurt Mesford-Lesmeister has made a life-changing impact as a DSP. Joining our organization specifically to provide additional support to a client who is a student he works with as a paraprofessional, Kurt brought a strong bond and deep understanding that has transformed this client's life. Since Kurt became his DSP, this client's behaviors have significantly decreased, and he's been empowered to try new experiences (including learning to drive) and build friendships outside of school for the first time. More than a caregiver, Kurt has become the steady, supportive father figure this client never had—proving that with trust and compassion, remarkable growth is possible.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT CCRI

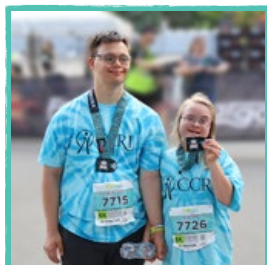
Adapt Theater

CCRI actors took to the stage for a hilarious performance of *King Midas and the Golden Touch*. Directed by Judy Lewis, executive director of the Fargo–Moorhead Community Theatre, the production even featured a dance number!



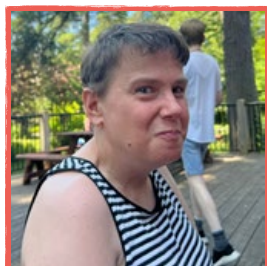
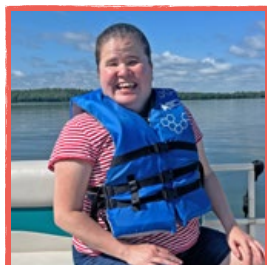
Fargo Marathon 5K

More than 70 of the folks we support laced up their sneakers to walk, jog, and wheel their way through the Fargo Marathon Mark Knutson Friday Night 5K. It was a night of athleticism, camaraderie and testing limits as we first gathered for a pre-race meal before joining the race.



Camp HERO

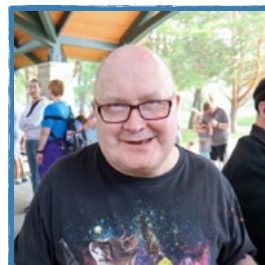
Camp HERO (which stands for Helping Everyone Remove Obstacles) provides an accessible, inclusive camp experience filled with fun, learning and unforgettable moments for people of all abilities. Our campers had a blast connecting with friends—and nature! Thank you to the FM Crusaders MC for helping make camp possible.





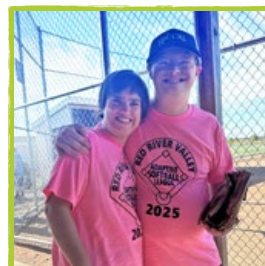
CCRI Talent Show

It's not just talent that goes into a talent show. It's also bravery, practice, and the enthusiastic support of family and friends. We saw that and so much more at our annual talent show. We are so impressed by every single person who had the courage to get up on stage and perform!



Client Appreciation Picnic

Our summer picnic shows our appreciation to those we support. It's a fun event with burgers cooked on the grill, cookies donated by Gate City Bank, and picnic tables filled with smiling people.



Adaptive Softball

The Red River Adaptive Softball League—organized by CCRI and open to anyone with a disability—focuses on FUN. Four teams of players and volunteer coaches had a home-run season that ended in a celebratory Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks game.



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SAVE THE DATES

Visit our Facebook page or CCRIMoorhead.org/Community for event details.

September 7–13 DSP Week

September 29–December 2 FM Area Foundation Caring Catalog

October 8 CCRI Client Prom

October 9 Post-Prom Fundraiser

October 28 Candy Crawl at the FARGODOME

November 4 Client appreciation dinner

November 20 Give to the Max Day

December 2 Giving Tuesday

January 13 Designer Purse Bingo Giving Hearts Day fundraiser

February 12 Giving Hearts Day

