

REACHING INDEPENDENCE

Helping Curtis Share His Story of Determination and Achievement



When Curtis Martin was 18 years old, he accomplished one of the rarest feats in Scouts, BSA—achieving the rank of Eagle Scout. Only 4% of scouts ever reach it—but for Curtis to achieve that rank as a person with disabilities puts him truly in elite company.

Curtis has always loved the outdoors and the peace and quiet it offers. But anyone who has been camping or participated in other outdoor activities knows they come with their own unique set of challenges. And for Curtis, who spends most of his time in a wheelchair because of cerebral palsy, those challenges are only amplified.

But he wasn't going to let his disability keep him away from camping as a Scout or slow him down—sometimes quite literally. He traded his wheelchair for a lawn tractor to get around at camp, and once in a while he would put it in full throttle to give his dad a bit of exercise

running after him. When the lawn tractor ran out of gas, his friends would carry him. And when he accidentally crushed his right eye contact on the day he was trying for his rifle merit badge, he just popped his left contact in his right eye and aimed straight to earn the badge (he's also considered legally blind).

Limits have always been relative to Curtis, who is a firm believer in the power of determination and believing in yourself.

"Whatever I put my mind to, I pretty much can do it," Curtis says.

It's a story and perspective worth sharing, and Curtis was invited to speak to local Scout Troop 244 about his time in Scouts and at CCRI as part of their effort to earn their disability awareness badge. He agreed, donning his Scout uniform for the first time in 13 years, though he was initially surprised by the ask.

"I was shocked, but honored," Curtis says.

The Scout troop finished their day by planting trees at a CCRI home, which will one day grow to be fitting reminders of how the power of community can help a person rise above any challenge.

"Once a Scout, always a Scout," says Curtis.



IN THIS TOGETHER

Casino Night Deals a Winning Hand for Home, Reimagined

We are so thankful to everyone who came out to support our Post-Prom Casino Night Fundraiser on October 9!

The night featured dinner, casino-style games, a silent auction and raffle, and a tremendous amount of fun for all involved. **You showed us what it means to be "all-in" for the people we support at CCRI.**



The focus for this year's fundraiser was our Home, Reimagined project, which will create a fully accessible, tech-enabled home designed to help people with disabilities live with greater independence, opportunity, and belonging. The home is currently under construction and progressing on schedule!



Hannah Papenfuss spoke about how the Home, Reimagined project will help her and others live the independent lives they have always dreamed of experiencing. For Hannah, whose cerebral palsy affects her physical mobility but not her ability to make her own choices, life can sometimes feel like a complex game of chess. But by building inclusive and accessible environments, she can mitigate a lot of the impacts of her disability.



"It's about minimizing barriers as much as possible to make my life the one that I choose, not the one my environment or my disability chooses for me," says Hannah.

The project is unique for our area and could be a steppingstone into a new era of health care where technology and skilled workers come together to provide care that maximizes independence for many of the people we support, says CCRI Executive Director Shannon Bock.

People with physical disabilities who need 24-hour care to meet their needs could live in a tech-enabled home that reduces the need to ask someone for assistance, giving them more freedom and choices throughout their day. Automatic door openers, voice assistants, and

track systems that help with movement between rooms are all pieces of technology that can improve quality of life and allow our staff to focus on areas where they can provide the greatest impact.

Resources, whether related to government funding or staffing, are always limited. We need to be looking at how we can leverage technology to provide care that is both people-centered and innovative.

"People can still live quality lives with the use of technology and minimal people. It spreads our workforce. It saves taxpayer dollars. It's something that needs to be considered," Shannon says.



Thank you for helping us build a brighter future for Hannah and others!

Let's Start 2026 Strong!

The Home, Reimagined project will be our focus for Giving Hearts Day and much of 2026. A year-end gift now will help us keep the momentum for this amazing project heading into the new year!

Year-end gifts can be sent to CCRI at 2903 15th St. S., Moorhead MN 56560, or you can donate online at [CCRIMoorhead.org](https://www.ccrimoorhead.org).

And be on the lookout for more information on our Giving Hearts Day efforts as the day approaches. Giving Hearts Day is such a fun and amazing day for us, and we can't wait to share it with you!

Fun Fact: If you need to take a required minimum distribution from a retirement fund, you can donate all or part of it as a qualified charitable distribution to CCRI—allowing you to exclude that amount from your taxable income while making a difference for others.



CREATIVE CARE

Meet the Community Engagement and Advancement Team

With the recent departure of Tracy Frank as Development and Communications Director, we took the opportunity to realign and rename the Development team to better illustrate the work it does for CCRI (fundraising, communications, volunteering, digital presence, and client activities). Introducing the Community Engagement and Advancement team!



Alita Hanson, Director—10 years of service

What do you enjoy most about your role? What I love most about my role is getting to tell others about why I love working with the people we serve and their families, and why the work CCRI does is so important to our community. I love to advocate and share stories so that people outside our agency understand the passion and dedication we have for helping people live the lives they choose.

Adam Schroeder, Assistant Director—3 years of service

What do you enjoy most about your role? Every day in my role brings something new, and I'm lucky to work alongside such passionate and talented people. What I enjoy most are the moments spent connecting with the amazing people we support.



Chuck Thorne, Digital Content, Production, and Development Specialist—14 years of service

What do you enjoy most about your role? The people, both clients and coworkers. Also, the fact we are encouraged to keep learning new skills and are given the opportunity and resources to do so.

Miranda Roberts, Community Engagement Coordinator—5 years of service

What do you enjoy most about your role? There's this amazing beauty in my position where I get to see the worlds of individuals with disabilities and those without come together and create genuine relationships, and I love being a part of that. It's inspiring to me. And of course, I also love a good craft.



Clinton Larson, Communications and Grant Writer—1 month of service

What do you enjoy most about your role? As the newest member in a new role, I've really been enjoying learning about our mission, the people we support, and the passion here to deliver in both those areas. There is a tremendous amount of heart in this organization.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

CCRI's Beth Dykema Named ANCOR DSP Ambassador

Congratulations to DSP Beth Dykema for being selected into the inaugural ANCOR DSP Ambassador program!

ANCOR (American Network of Community Options and Resources) created the DSP Ambassador program to "enhance the ability of direct support professionals to speak up, speak out, and tell their stories about the vital role they play in the communities they serve."

Beth helped shape national conversations around disability services, connected with other leaders,



when she traveled to Washington, D.C. for the 2025 Policy Summit and Hill Day to meet with lawmakers and policymakers.

For more than 35 years, Beth has supported individuals at CCRI in every setting imaginable, from in-home care to 24-hour programs to our tech-forward Independent by Design program. Her knowledge, compassion, and deep commitment have changed countless lives, and

we know she'll do a fantastic job representing DSPs on a national level.

2026 Will Be a Time for Advocacy

Strong emotions and a call to action and advocacy were highlights of the ARRM District Dialogue held at CCRI on October 29.

Rep. Heather Keeler (DFL) of District 4A joined the meeting to hear directly from guardians, caregivers and organizations involved in supporting people with disabilities.

It was clear from the start that cuts in both state and federal funding were weighing heavy on people's minds. In one heartfelt statement, Tracy Heng spoke about how the cut in support hours for her daughter Ashlin would make it nearly impossible to meet all her needs, as well as impose hardship on their family's time and resources.



"There are going to be long lasting and long reaching effects," Tracy said of the cuts.

The path ahead may seem daunting, but what Rep. Keeler stressed was that now was the time to organize advocacy. The legislature is entering a policy year in 2026, and she encouraged everyone there to bring their voices and stories to the legislative process, whether that was through testimony on proposed bills, taking part in task forces and working groups or attending events like Day at the Capitol. January through March is a critical time to get involved because policies will be in the development stage and there's more opportunity to be in a hearing room talking directly to legislators.

"When we talk about advocacy, timing is key," Rep. Keeler said.

She stressed that organizations and people need to find their allies in the community to help build momentum. She also reiterated her passion for advocating for the professionals in our industry and the people we support.

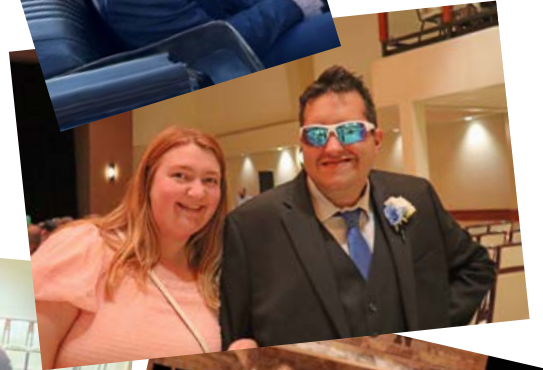
"I will always show up for you guys," Rep. Keeler said.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT CCRI

Prom

The Avalon Events Center transformed into the Old West for our annual CCRI Prom. From the hair, makeup and outfits to the setup, celebrating and takedown, a host of volunteers helped turn the night into another joyful success for the people we serve. Thank you!





HALLOWEEN CANDY CRAWL

A drizzly October day turned into a frightfully fun evening at the Fargodome for our Candy Crawl. It was such a blast to see the creativity on display for the tables and costumes, and our people were able to trick or treat in a safe, accessible environment. Everyone had a great time!





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the
Date**



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