

On With Life headway magazine

SUMMER 2015

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About the Cover: Diane Bemis, OTR/L, CBIS, occupational therapist at On With Life's Long-Term program and Richard Jorgensen, person served, enjoy a therapy session in the OWL's Nest.

Photo taken by Jennifer Johnston.



a letter from our director

If you have visited our Ankeny campus in the last year, you have likely noticed that we are undergoing a major expansion and renovation. By the end of August we plan to put the finishing touches on the \$5 million project, which is our biggest construction endeavor since opening in 1991!

The project, fittingly called *Life Forward*, includes many exciting areas including new person served rooms, additional therapy space including new speech classrooms and a multi-purpose room, an expanded cafeteria and coffee shop/café, and a new wellness/education room. While these areas will enhance our therapeutic environment at OWL, the major part of the project will allow us to dramatically increase the number of individuals we are able to serve. A new 10,000 square foot outpatient therapy center will double the number of outpatients we are able to serve and allow us to continue to grow our neuro based program offerings to meet the needs of the community. Our outpatient center will have a practice apartment to make rehabilitation therapies more meaningful, a large therapy gym, a specialized vestibular therapy room and most exciting, our very own aquatic therapy pool, which will be used on an inpatient and outpatient basis!

The On With Life Outpatient Neuro Rehabilitation program is a good example of how On With Life has expanded our continuum to meet the rehabilitation needs of those we serve and the entire community. The program opened in 2011 after families asked us for almost 20 years to expand so their loved ones could be served by the experts at On With Life after discharge from our Inpatient program. Now our Outpatient program serves anyone in the community who needs specialty neuro-based outpatient therapy.

After providing brain injury rehabilitation for almost 25 years, one thing we know for certain is that it is imperative for individuals living with brain injury to receive treatment from therapists who have specialized experience in serving their unique needs. I am very proud to say that both our Outpatient and Inpatient programs offer more than just traditional therapy services. They provide integrated, transdisciplinary programing while delivering meaningful, therapeutic interventions across multiple therapy and rehabilitation disciplines. They are some of the best in their field and I am honored to work alongside each of them.

Julie Fidler Dixon, Executive Director



August 1

On With Life Post-Acute Inpatient Reunion On With Life

September 11

On With Life Brain Injury Rehabilitation Conference

FFA Enrichment Center Ankeny, IA

September 24

Celebrate Life Fundraising Event On With Life Ankeny, IA

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On With Life's Outpatient Neuro Rehabilitation team is proud to offer Lee Silverman Voice Treatment (LSVT®), an effective treatment program for those living with Parkinson's disease. LSVT BIG focuses on strength, movement, balance, coordination and function, while LSVT LOUD brings the voice to an improved, healthy vocal loudness with no strain. Pictured are Bruce Schwering on his last day of the 4-week program with Sue Sandahl, MA, OTR/L. To learn more about the LSVT programs at On With Life or to view patient testimonials, visit www.onwithlife.org/LSVT.

program updates

Construction Update

After more than a year under construction, On With Life's Ankeny campus is nearing the end of its first ever expansion and renovation project. This project will increase and improve access to services and enhance the therapeutic property at On With Life.

▲ New Outpatient Center

When complete, new updates include:

- A 10,000 square foot permanent outpatient center, including a new therapy gym
- A practice apartment to provide individualized, home-based training
- A wellness and community education center
- An aquatic therapy pool with an underwate treadmill
- Two specialized inpatient rooms, bringing our number of beds to 28
- An expanded kitchen and dining room, including a coffee shop/café area
- New speech therapy treatment rooms
- New and renovated therapy treatment area
- A multi-purpose space that will accommodate family gatherings, special events and therapy sessions
- A family house that will be a comfortable home-like environment for loved ones
- Therapy gardens with new walking trails, gazebos, and interactive areas like butterfly gardens, water features, and a zen garden (a long-term project to be completed over the next two years)



New Aquatic Therapy Pool ▶

CELEBRATE



Learn more at onwithlife.org

Fundraising Event

We are excited to announce Celebrate Life, a fundraising event at On With Life on September 24 that will celebrate not only our recent expansion project, but the thousands of individuals whom we have been privileged to serve. Celebrate Life will be a wonderful evening filled with music, food, drinks and special guest speakers including Governor Terry Branstad and board member and family member of person served, Troy DeJoode.

Funds raised through the Celebrate Life event will go directly toward providing life-changing specialized therapy equipment for those whom we are privileged to serve. Through the On With Life Foundation, our programs have purchased more than \$350,000 in equipment, which has aided our rehabilitation teams help survivors get "On With Life!"

For more information on sponsoring or attending the Celebrate Life event, visit www.onwithlife.org/CelebrateLife.





STRONG, LUCKY AND BLESSED

LUIS MARIN-BARRON Admission: March 2011 Discharge: August 2011

Life was good for Luis Marin-Barron in early 2011. He had just accepted a promotion into management and was enjoying life with family and friends. That all changed on January 29, 2011, when he was involved in a serious head-on collision near Carroll, lowa. Luis suffered massive injuries to his body, brain and internal organs. He had to be cut out of his car and taken by air ambulance to a Des Moines hospital.

"The sheriff on the scene told us he most likely wouldn't live," said Patricia Marin, Luis's sister. "But he is a fighter and a true miracle."

After six weeks in the hospital, Luis arrived at On With Life in a coma and spent five months in our Post-Acute Inpatient Rehabilitation program, two of which were spent in our Disorders of Consciousness (coma) program.

"I owe a lot to On With Life," said Luis. "They helped me relearn how to walk, talk and eat. I am very grateful."

After Luis was discharged, Patricia and her family continued caring for Luis for two years, a role she says On With Life helped prepare her for.



Luis (front-right) with his family.

"We couldn't have continued helping and supporting him without the education and guidance from On With Life staff," said Patricia. "They changed our lives as a family."

Now four years later, life is good once again for Luis. In 2014, he met Sandra Yesenia Marin and they were married in February of this year. He plans to return to work and has accepted a management role with a waste management company – the same position he had accepted before his accident.

"My life is coming back, and it's better than before," said Luis. "I'm strong, lucky and blessed."

A PASSION RETURNED

MICHELLE LARA

Admission: September 2009 Discharge: February 2010

Michelle Lara had a strict work-out routine of waking up at each morning to run five miles and complete 125 push-ups before heading to work as an operating room nurse.



Michelle riding her newly purchased three-wheeled bicycle.

That routine changed in

2009 when she was a non-helmeted passenger on a motorcycle that was rear-ended by a car. Michelle suffered a skull fracture and required an emergency craniotomy to remove her right temporal lobe, which left her with left-side paralysis and made it very unlikely she would be able to work again.

"It might seem funny, but one of the most devastating things for me after the accident was wondering how I would do push-ups again," said Michelle.

Michelle credits the excellent therapy and nursing care during her five-month stay at On With Life with giving her the ability to continue her love of physical activity.

"The nursing and therapy staff listened to what was important to me and what I wanted to get back to," said Michelle. "It would have been easy to just lay there and wonder what I would do, but I wanted to enjoy life."

Since her accident, Michelle has purchased a three-wheeled bike and has already logged more than 15,000 miles on it. In addition to her new exercise routine, Michelle has returned to school and received both her bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing and is currently pursuing her doctorate in nursing practice with the hopes of teaching nursing to the next generation.

"I can teach them things they can't learn in a book. Be empathetic and listen to your patient, not only with your ears, but with your heart," said Michelle. "The staff at On With Life are true examples of this."



Teagan and Carrie renewing their wedding vows in Jamaica in 2012.

LOVE AND HOPE

TEAGAN ROUSE

Admission: February 21, 2011 Discharge: August 27, 2012

Teagan and Carrie Rouse were newlyweds and busy planning their life together when their world was turned upside down. In 2011, Teagan fell more than 60 feet in a work-related accident and sustained massive injuries. He was admitted to On With Life's Disorders of Consciousness (coma) program and spent four months in a coma, unable to walk, talk, eat or drink.

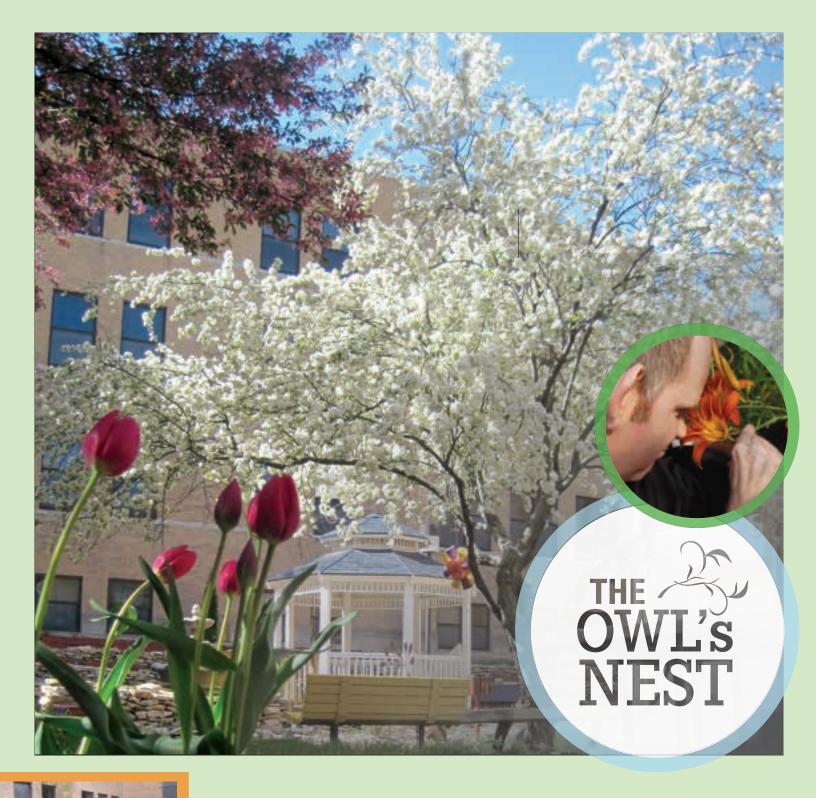
"The doctors didn't give us much hope, so I was unsure of how Teagan's recovery would go," said Carrie.

But with the help of On With Life, the Rouses slowly began rebuilding their life. Teagan spent 18 months at On With Life, relearning daily functions like how to eat and brush his teeth. Carrie quit her job and moved to Ankeny to participate in each therapy session with him, even doing extra therapy with him at night and on the weekends.

"The focus at On With Life is to help persons served and their family get on with their lives, and that is exactly what they did for us," said Carrie. "There is no doubt in my mind that Teagan is where he is today because of his time at On With Life. The experience, passion and dedication the staff show to each person is nothing short of amazing."

Teagan and Carrie have been busy building a life together that they love, which included renewing their wedding vows on the beaches of Jamaica on their fifth wedding anniversary in 2012.

"Simply put, life is good," said Carrie. "We travel, enjoy eating out, bike together and spend time with friends and family. We have so much to be thankful for and so many good years to look forward to."



A once overgrown and unused outdoor courtyard has been transformed into a garden for the persons served, families and staff at On With Life's Long-Term Skilled Care Program for Youth and Younger Adults, located on the Glenwood Resource Center campus in Glenwood, Iowa. And while all gardens are designed to stimulate the senses, the 6,000 square foot space, named the OWL's Nest, was designed as a sensory garden, which means plants and other design elements are selected to provide experiences for heightened sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste.

A grassroots effort began in 2012 to gather the resources needed to renovate the space and convert it to a sensory garden. Since then, the garden has grown to include a covered patio with wheelchair swing, an outdoor grill with seating area for family and staff, a gazebo with a wheelchair accessible ramp, large flower pots and raised flower beds, sand and sun area, a memorial garden for persons served, and a variety of bird baths, wind chimes, solar lights, and kinetic spinners for added stimulation.

"There are so many beautiful areas in the garden," said Geri Reed, therapeutic rehab tech. "It really gives us so many options for therapy and it adds to the variety of choices for persons served."

Using the garden and the various opportunities within the space, therapists work on strength, balance, hand-eye coordination, range-of-motion and endurance through initiatives like planting, painting or watering. The staff also plans special events for persons served out in the space, like a fourth of July party or a day of miniature golfing. It is also the simple things like listening to the birds or feeling the wind in their hair.

"In the garden, there is always something new or changing – a flower blooming, a new plant to feel. This provides longevity for our therapy," said Jeni Durfey, recreation therapy coordinator for On With Life. "Our facility may look pretty much the same from day-to-day, but the garden never looks the same.

This year, persons served and staff planted vegetables in the garden, which they will harvest and use in their cooking group. Persons served like Richard Jorgensen, who loved to garden prior to sustaining a brain injury in 2009, helped plant, water and weed the vegetables.

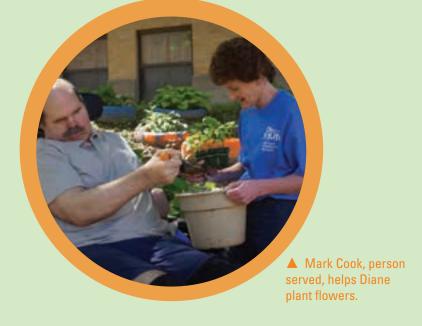
"Rich enjoys going outside as often as possible to work in the garden," says Jeni. "The garden gives him a sense of responsibility and he enjoys taking care of the many plants. It is an extension of his home here at On With Life."

Mark Cook, a person served at On With Life since 1997, also enjoys spending time outside in the garden, so Diane Bemis, occupational therapist for On With Life, often integrates garden work into Mark's therapies, including painting a bench and replenishing the bird seed in the feeders.

"It's a big deal for those with limited movement to have such an important role in the development of the garden," said Diane. "To be able to perform a purposeful act is important for them, and it really increases their selfesteem."

Mark's parents, Jerry and Marcia Cook, say they're not surprised by Mark's love for the outdoors. Mark, who was injured in a motorcycle accident in 1988 when he was 24 years old, was always an active, outdoorsy person who loved hunting, fishing and camping.

"He likes to be outside and helping, and the garden provides things for him to do to stay busy and as therapy, which has helped him tremendously," said Marcia.



"We are so glad the garden is there for Mark. It has definitely added to his quality of life."

Spending time in the garden is often part of the physical and occupational therapy regimen, but there are emotional benefits as well, Diane says. Mark is more engaged when

he's outside, and Rich is more cooperative and calmer. Research has shown individuals may derive benefits simply from being in close proximity to plants and nature, including reduced signs of depression, decreased stress, improved self-esteem and personal growth.

"The garden brings body, mind and spirit together," said Diane. "There's a peacefulness and brightness to the persons served when they're out in the garden."



A John, person served, watches as his father, Mike Hardesty, marries Jodi Sleeger in the OWL's Nest in April.

On With Life staff are seeing an increased

number of families gathering in the garden when they visit. It has become a place of relaxation and respite for the persons served and their families.

"When families come to visit, they can take their loved one out of their room and out to the garden," said Diane. "It allows a family to feel like they are home."

When lowa weather permits, the garden is used up to 35 times per week. The team never misses an opportunity to see the joy on the faces of those they serve.

"The smiles on the persons served faces – that's what makes it all worthwhile," said Geri. "We do it all for them."

people making a DIFFERENCE

SCI CAN Foundation



Terry Norton (center) presents Julie Fidler Dixon and Pat Stilwill with a \$20,000 donation. Through tragedy, Chris Norton and his family have created something extraordinary. The SCI CAN Foundation, founded in 2012 by the Norton family, was inspired by an injury Chris sustained in a football game in 2010 after which he was given only a 3 percent chance of ever regaining any movement below his neck.

Today, Chris is defying odds every chance he gets, recently walking with little assistance across the stage for his collage graduation. His Foundation has

donated more than \$275,000 to rehabilitation and research programs around the Midwest, including donations to On With Life for the purchase of a Biodex Balancing System, a walking track system, and most recently, a \$20,000 donation for the purchase of outdoor therapy equipment. The equipment will be used in On With Life's new outdoor

therapeutic gardens and will give individuals a chance to get outside and enjoy nature, something that really resonated with the Norton family.

"We know from our own personal experiences that at times outdoor sports and activities can be limited for people with disabilities, and spending so much time inside can get wearing," said Terry Norton, president of SCI CAN Foundation and Chris's father. "Having the opportunity to not only be outside, but to be doing therapy outside is a tremendous concept."

According to Terry, access to equipment is vital. "Everyone should have the opportunity to improve function and quality of life to their fullest potential and only be limited by the severity of their injury and not by lack of access or equipment," he said.

To learn more about the SCI CAN Foundation and how you can help support their mission, visit **www.scicanfoundation.com**.

Vilia Tarvydas, Ph.D., LMHC, CRC

Board Member

Vilia Tarvydas, professor of rehabilitation and mental health counseling and chair of the department of rehabilitation and counselor education at the University of Iowa, will retire this summer and become a professor emeritus. She joined the On With Life Inc. Board of Directors in 1998. Her career as a rehabilitation counselor and psychologist for more than 40 years provides a unique provider and advocate perspective on the board.

What drew you to support the On With Life mission?

Prior to joining the faculty at the University of lowa in 1991, I worked in a medical neurobehavioral rehabilitation setting with individuals recovering from traumatic brain injury (TBI) and I found myself missing my work. The opportunity to serve on the On With Life board allowed me to be involved with individuals with TBIs – work that had meant so much to me. This opportunity has enriched me immeasurably, and the high level of dedication and the professional quality of the work done on this board to support the clinical enterprise is humbling.

What makes On With Life so special and unique?

The staff have some of the highest levels of specialized expertise in TBI rehabilitation that you'll see anywhere, combined with a deeply felt dedication and mission. These areas characterize all the efforts and programs that are part of On With Life.

What are your goals for the future of On With Life?

My goals are to continue to serve on the board of directors as On With Life moves forward to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing healthcare environment. Together we will continue to support the excellent and innovative clinical work that distinguishes On With Life. I will continue to integrate best practices in ethics with clinical service, as well as try to move forward the research collaborations. Research in TBI treatment advances the knowledge of what practices most benefit persons living with a brain injury and their families and is critical to improving services available. On With Life has always excelled in these areas and I want them to continue to do so as we move into the future.



"Together we will continue to support the excellent and innovative clinical work that distinguishes On With Life."

Karl Chevrolet

Back in the early 1990s, Carl Moyer, owner of Karl Chevrolet in Ankeny, had a technician who was served at On With Life. The excellent care he received inspired Carl to make a donation to On With Life, and he has continued to do so each year.

"Head trauma is serious, and On With Life treats it with the specialized attention it deserves," said Carl. "It's a way of giving back to an organization that cares for such a unique population."

Karl Chevrolet's most recent donation was a car specially built for On With Life. The Karl Chevrolet team spent more than 300 hours customizing the car, which included removing the motor and adding lifts and other accessibility features. The car now sits inside the therapy gym and will be used for therapy and family education.

"The thought of donating a car really intrigued me. It identifies such an important need in the therapy process, one that many of us take for granted," said Carl. "This is such a cool idea, and I'm excited to see how this project will help the persons served and their families."

Carl's commitment to On With Life also includes his wife, Penny. The Moyers have been faithful annual donors to On With Life since its opening in 1991 and recently provided a major gift to the Life Forward capital campaign.

"We've been supporters of On With Life since its beginning," said Carl. "On With Life is much more than a success story. It's an outstanding organization, and I'm proud to be associated with it."



"On With Life is much more than a success story."

GET TO KNOW

Dave Anders MS, CCC-SLP, CBIST Director of Therapy



Experience:

Dave has worked in the areas of neurogenic communication, cognition, and swallowing disorders for 18 years, 13 of those at On With Life, where he is the director of therapy services. Dave is also a Certified Brain Injury Specialist Trainer through the American Academy for the Certification of Brain Injury Specialists.

Undergraduate Degree:

University of Nebraska at Kearney, B.S., Communication Disorders, 1995

Master's Degree:

University of Nebraska at Kearney, M.S., Speech and Language Pathology, 1997

Family:

Married 22 years to wife Deb; daughter Lauren, 14; son Blake, 11.

Interesting Facts:

- Started his college years as a marketing major.
- Runs most mornings with his 11-year-old spaniel mix, Daisy.
- He spends any free time he can find fly fishing throughout the Midwest.





Dave Anders

On With Life's director of therapy, Dave Anders, discusses four of the common challenges faced by survivors and caregivers following a brain injury.



"Getting things done takes me so much longer than it used to."

For survivors, a slower processing speed is the hallmark of brain injury. While it is important for others to be patient with you, it is even more important for you to be patient with yourself. For caregivers, the urge to jump in and do the task for the survivor can be overwhelming. However, this simply teaches the survivor to depend on you. Rather than doing things for the survivor, coach them through tasks and offer options.



"Sometimes I can do certain things easily...other times the same things can be very difficult."

For survivors, there are a host of circumstances that can alter how easy or difficult a task is, including fatigue, distractions, the time of day and your frustration level. Remember that if you push yourself too hard, your performance may actually worsen. For caregivers, it is important to recognize that inconsistency in performance is almost never related to the survivor "not trying hard enough," and is more likely due to a factor out of the survivor's control.



"I get angry and sad much more easily than I used to."

For survivors, understand that this is likely because your brain has difficulty regulating emotion. Think of it as a heater with a faulty thermostat. Things that may have frustrated you or angered you just a little before, may now cause you to become very angry or sad. Be aware that difficulty controlling emotions can also be a sign you are fatigued and need to take a break. For caregivers, it is often better to change the topic rather than dwell on what made them sad or angry (which may just worsen or prolong the emotion). Given the right approach, the emotion can be turned off as quickly as it turned on.



"People always tell me I can't do things like drive or work. I get tired of all the 'can'ts' in my life."

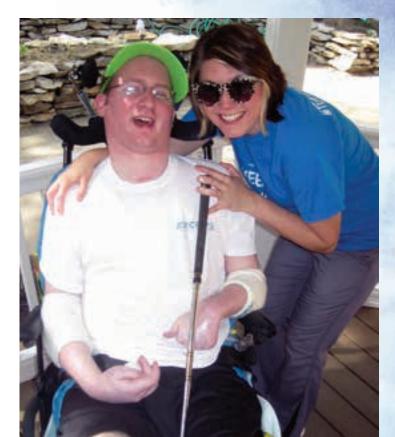
For survivors, it is important to understand that sometimes the "can'ts" in life are helpful to maintain safety. Your challenge is to change how you think about those "can'ts." When you focus on the things people say that you "can't do," it quickly becomes difficult to maintain hope. Hope is like the gas that fills your tank. You need it to accomplish your goals, develop new strategies and move forward with life. The good news is that improvement after brain iniury occurs over years, so it is difficult for anyone to know exactly what you will and won't accomplish in life. For caregivers, avoid framing the conversations in the negative (avoid the words can't, don't, shouldn't and no) and instead focus on how far the survivor has come and things they can do. Your job is both to help keep the survivor safe and fill up their tank with hope.



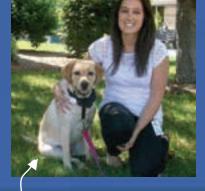


OUTDOOR therapy

The benefits of participating in outdoor activities are endless. Research shows that individuals may derive a benefit simply from being in close proximity to plants and nature, including reduced signs of depression, decreased stress, improved self-esteem and personal growth. Working in an outdoor setting helps rehabilitation feel less like therapy and more like real life situations, which increases motivation and participation.







Meet Lolo, On With Life's Therapy Dog.



PET therapy





On With Life offers pet therapy as a service to our persons served in our programs in Ankeny and Glenwood. Pets and their owners work together to provide comfort, companionship and enjoyment to our persons served and their families. The impact of therapy animals is profound, from offering companionship to real medical benefits, including significantly reduced pain, anxiety, depression and fatigue. On With Life is privileged to have a facility dog in training, Lolo, who assists with therapy for those with balance, mobility and strength challenges, while providing an emotional connection and motivation to persons served.



Carla Dippold Named a Great Iowa Nurse

Congratulations to Carla Dippold, RN, BS, CRRN, CCM, CBIS, director of case management at On With Life, who was honored as a 2015 Great Iowa Nurse. The Great Iowa Nurse program identifies 100 outstanding nurses every year whose courage, competence, and commitment to patients and the nursing profession stand out above all others.

Carla began her career as a nurse in 1983 and has served as a nurse case manager since 1990. Her expertise spans the entire rehabilitation continuum, from therapy and psychology to leadership and case management. Her influence has widely impacted several generations of new nurses, as she sets an example of how a nurse case manager can not only impact the way services are delivered, but also improve access to essential services.

"She is a tireless advocate whose heart is always with the people she is privileged to serve," said Julie Fidler Dixon, executive director, On With Life. "Carla always goes the extra mile and is a wonderful leader dedicated to getting individuals the services they deserve."

Those who work with Carla are touched by her dedication and impressed with her wide range of knowledge.

"It has been a privilege to have Carla as a resource and mentor," said Dave Anders, director of therapy at On With Life. "She truly embodies the concepts of character, attitude, competence, and excellence."



Hard Work Earns Gold Medal

If anyone would have asked 27-year-old Brad Bergan in the last year what his number one goal was, they would have gotten a very clear answer, to be a gold medal winner.

Brad was seven years old when he had surgery to remove a benign brain tumor that left him with a brain injury. But Brad never let that setback hold him back and has gone on to become an independent, friendly young man.

"We are very proud of Brad and all of his accomplishments," Lorena and Scott Bergan, Brad's parents.

> "Living independently and having a quality life is very

important to him."

On With Life's Supported Community Living (SCL) team, a group of specialists who work

one-on-one with individuals who have experienced a brain injury and help them live independently, began working with Brad at the beginning of 2015.

"Our priority is to know the interests and goals of those we serve and help them work towards those goals," said Tanya Schultz, On With Life SCL specialist. "For Brad, we found out very quickly that his goal was to participate in the Special Olympic lowa Games, so that became our goal as well."

Their hard work together paid off. Brad competed in the softball throw in the Special Olympics in April and won a gold medal, something his mother says wouldn't have been possible without the On With Life SCL team.

"Thanks to the On With Life staff, Brad was well prepared," said Lorena. "Their number one goal was to help Brad succeed and I'll never forget the look on his face when he won that gold medal."

To learn more about the OWL Wish List or to make a donation, visit www.onwithlife.org/wishlist.



715 SW Ankeny Road | Ankeny, Iowa 50023

Joining hands, hearts, and minds to help persons living with brain injury get On With Life.

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Intended for healthcare providers, the On With Life Fall Conference brings together experts from around the U.S. to discuss recent trends in the field of brain injury. Topics will include the future of rehabilitation, research trends, improving performance and accountability, Medicaid planning and eligibility, rehabilitation ethics related to supported decision making and a brain injury rehabilitation case study.

President & CEO

of Shepherd Center in Atlanta, GA

\$60 Early bird registration by August 20. \$70 after August 20. Other CEU fees may apply

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER, VISIT: www.onwithlife.org