

# InTouch

Summer 2018

A publication for the many friends and supporters of ChildServe

## The Next Stage of a *Great* Life



### Joel's Story

Jeff and Nancy spent the summer getting ready for an exciting moment: moving their only child to college. The path to seeing their son, Joel, reach this milestone has been filled with unknowns. In fact, for many years his parents weren't sure it would be possible at all.

Joel has a moderate intellectual disability and severe ADHD, as well as verbal communication difficulties. The friendly, confident young adult who was crowned homecoming king at Johnston High School has come a long way from the 6-year-old whose behavior resulted in seven daycare changes in under two years.

As Joel began receiving multiple services at ChildServe, Jeff and Nancy noticed early on that having a multidisciplinary team focused on the same goals helped him make progress.

"The relationship between all of the services is very close," says Jeff. "Everyone was on the same page to move Joel toward his goals. The skills he was learning in occupational and physical therapy would be reinforced in supported community living and respite, and vice versa. I think that makes a big difference for kids like Joel."

"I remember the day Joel's parents brought me a paper he had written in school about how he wanted to go to college," says Tania Bentley, who was Joel's case manager for 13 years. "At that moment, we started focusing all of his goals around making that a reality."

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Friendly, confident and ready for the next big   
step in life—Joel is excited for college.



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Occupational therapy life skills groups made an especially big impact on Joel as he got to know other teens who were working on similar goals.

“Joel learned a huge range of skills that will help him thrive at college and later in life,” says Christine Weiland, occupational therapist. “He has important self-care skills like getting ready for the day, keeping his house clean and knowing which foods are part of a healthy diet. He also has the confidence and self-awareness to politely ask questions when he needs help.”

From building social skills like phone and texting etiquette, to safety skills like what to do when he has a fever, Joel thrived as he learned that the harder he worked in therapy, the more independent he could be in life.

In May, Joel’s hard work paid off when he was accepted at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa. Northwestern NEXT is a unique program that allows students with intellectual or developmental disabilities to participate in campus life and learning. Joel will live with three roommates in his suite, two of whom are special education majors.

Of all his accomplishments, his parents are most excited that Joel has taken ownership of his story.

“I’m proud of how much Joel has changed in the past couple years,” says Jeff. “He knows that he wants more out of life, and he’s willing to put in the work to get there.”



Joel worked hard to build the skills he would need to be independent at college.

## Bubble Ball 2018

# Kids, Cartoons and Comics

From giant comic books and superheroes to Scooby-Doo, the Minions and Charlie Brown, Bubble Ball 2018 popped with outstanding bubble wrap creations. This year's theme of "Kids, Cartoons and Comics" challenged over 70 local designers to bring their favorite characters to life.

Over 1,000 attendees enjoyed the evening filled with wearable and stationary bubble wrap designs, live music from crowd favorite Brazilian 2wines, delicious food, and a spectacular runway show.

This year, money was raised for a special piece of equipment that will strengthen ChildServe's rehabilitation programs. The Bioness Interactive Therapy System (BITS) is a touchscreen technology that turns challenging rehabilitation into games and activities. The BITS also streamlines the documentation process for therapists and

makes it easier for parents, children and therapists to see the progress being made.

Thanks to the generosity of guests and sponsors, the 8th annual Bubble Ball brought in over \$373,000. Guests at the event joined forces to help ChildServe purchase not one, but two BITS machines, which can be used by children in our outpatient therapy, inpatient rehabilitation and concussion programs.

"At Bubble Ball, we see our community go above and beyond to help ChildServe make a positive impact on children with special healthcare needs," says Cheri Burns, director of development and community relations.

"Bubble Ball is an exciting, over-the-top and glamorous show, but the heart of our event is always focused on the amazing kids we serve. To all our donors, designers and volunteers: Thank you for your incredible support."

**+** Save the date for next year!  
Join us on Saturday, April 6, 2019,  
for more bubble-wrapped fun.

### 2018-19 ChildServe Board Members

Kip Albertson  
Vanessa Blanchfield  
Loren Brockhouse  
John Bruntz  
Jay Byers  
Megan Christofferson  
Reynolds Cramer  
Doug Cretsinger  
Jerry Deegan  
Doug Dornacker  
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Brian Laurenzo  
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Larry Stelter  
Tom Stewart  
Cathy Stjernberg  
Sally Studer, DO  
Jennifer Vicente  
Teri Wahlig, MD  
Mike Wegner  
Kim Willis  
Emily Willits  
Maria Wood



# Fraternal Order of Eagles Partners With ChildServe



*People Helping People.* That's the motto of the nonprofit The Fraternal Order of Eagles. Last year they put that motto into action by selecting ChildServe as the 2017–18 state charity of the year.

Debbie Gilson, state madam president, 2017–2018, says that ChildServe was chosen because Eagles leadership wanted to focus on helping children. They were looking for a way to help as many families as possible.

“We chose ChildServe for our state charity because of the many options for care, treatment and education available to families,” says Gilson. “ChildServe’s brand promise of ‘believing in the spirit of a child’ really inspired us.”

From auctions and dinners to jewelry sales and raffles, the many events hosted by the Eagles added up to a big impact—over \$103,000 was raised. The donation will help expand ChildServe’s autism program and refurbish the playground at ChildServe in Ames.

For Gilson, who has a family member with autism, the chance to support children with special healthcare needs was extremely important.

“Autism is a growing concern for many families, so any way we could help ChildServe expand the autism program was our mission,” says Gilson. “In regard to the Ames playground, we wanted make sure that the children who benefited from it had a safe and nurturing environment to enjoy.”

Throughout Iowa, there are over 11,000 members in The Fraternal Order of Eagles. To each person who donated in support of our mission to help children with special healthcare needs live a *great* life: Thank you for making a difference!

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## Behavioral Health Expanding

At ChildServe, listening to our families is the key to helping children with special healthcare needs live a *great* life. Recently, the need for additional behavioral health support in our community has become clear. Nearly 30 percent of the children we serve have both a developmental disability and a behavioral health diagnosis.

With this need in mind, the ChildServe Foundation has begun efforts to raise money to expand our behavioral health program

and clinic. Currently, our behavioral health services include the autism program, diagnostic clinic, mental health therapy and pediatric psychology. Many of the children we treat have conditions that include anxiety disorders, depression, separation anxiety, oppositional defiance, reactive attachment, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and autism.

With support from outstanding donors like The Iowa Fraternal Order of Eagles, we’re looking forward to helping more kids and families find support to overcome challenges.

# Leadership Transition

## An Incredible History and a Bright Future

After 26 years as ChildServe's CEO and President, Lloyd VanderKwaak retired in July 2018. During his tenure, the organization grew from a local human services agency that served 175 children into a nationally recognized pediatric specialty healthcare organization that serves 4,500 children in Iowa each year.

Due to the growth and success of ChildServe, and the complexity of its operations, the board decided to split the positions of CEO and president. This summer ChildServe celebrated the appointments of Teri Wahlig, MD, as ChildServe's CEO and David McKenzie as ChildServe's president and COO.

Dr. Wahlig previously served as ChildServe's executive vice president and chief medical officer. As CEO, Dr. Wahlig's focus includes partnering with the board on governance and strategic planning, providing executive oversight, fundraising and community engagement.

McKenzie previously served as ChildServe's executive vice president and chief financial officer. As president and COO, McKenzie provides operational leadership including administrative and program oversight.

"Teri and David bring complementary skill sets," says VanderKwaak. "The board and I have great confidence they will build on ChildServe's mission-driven culture, growth and operational excellence."



## Great Life Fund Established

In his 26-year tenure, Lloyd VanderKwaak, former ChildServe president and CEO, fostered and grew our mission to partner with families to help children with special healthcare needs live a *great* life. Every day, ChildServe team members live this mission by providing exceptional care and brainstorming creative ways to make *great* life moments happen for every child we serve.

The *Great* Life Fund acknowledges staff members who have gone above and beyond and provides project funding for those who have bright ideas for making an impact in the lives of children. By remembering the extraordinary moments that were made possible, and continuously seeking new ways to provide the very best for the children we serve, Lloyd's "great life" legacy will live on.



**Lloyd VanderKwaak**, center, retired in July. **Dr. Teri Wahlig**, left, and **David McKenzie**, right, bring deep experience and strong vision to their new leadership roles.

# Nurturing a Fighting Spirit

## Andrea's Story

Ten days before Andrea's 14th birthday, a rollover crash on an icy road threw her from the car. It was too cold even for emergency helicopters to fly, so with a spinal cord injury, multiple broken ribs and a broken pelvis, clavicle and diaphragm, she was taken to Blank Children's Hospital by ambulance. She was paralyzed from the chest down.

When Andrea came to ChildServe's inpatient rehabilitation program on her 14th birthday, she began fighting to become as healthy as possible, both physically and mentally.

"We just took everything day by day," says Andrea's dad, Juan. "We tried to be strong and face each problem directly, so we could share that strength with Andrea."

The team at ChildServe discovered that Andrea was ready to fight hard to regain independence. Physical and occupational therapists helped her relearn to use her upper body muscles while the medical team provided expert care for her injuries. Part of Andrea's healing process included wearing a back brace for several months.

"The day after Andrea was cleared to remove her brace, I was ready to teach her all these small steps to begin building up to more difficult tasks," says Allison Freel, physical therapist. "But she jumped in without hesitation! I was in awe as Andrea did things on the first day that I thought would take her a lot longer to learn."

Andrea went from needing help to do everything, to doing many things mostly on her own. She learned to move herself up into a sitting position, and she can transfer herself from her bed to her wheelchair without assistance. In occupational therapy, Andrea mastered important skills for independence like bathing and getting dressed.

The team at ChildServe also made sure Andrea learned new ways to access the activities that make her happy. Recreational therapist Ashley Paulsen helped the family lay the groundwork for doing things they enjoy.

"Getting Andrea involved in things she likes doing helped create a sense of normalcy for her," says Ashley. "I wanted to make sure Andrea had social interaction and community integration to increase her confidence, her sense of independence and raise her self-esteem before she moved home."



Andrea never lets obstacles stand in her way—her bright spirit is infectious.

As Andrea built tolerance to being in her wheelchair, she joined outings to the Blank Park Zoo, a WNBA game, the mall, Courage League Sports and more. Along with discovering the possibilities of competition through adaptive sports, Andrea used her love of drawing to express her creativity and process her experiences.

“Andrea learned to be an advocate in her own care, and be honest about which activities and adaptive sports she was interested in,” says Ashley. “It amazes me that even at a young age, Andrea has such strength to persevere.”

While Andrea regained many skills and increased independence at ChildServe, her family says the things that inspire them most about her have nothing to do with her injury or recovery. “She is a very kind soul and person,” says Juan. “We are so proud of her in every way.”



Therapeutic recreation uses the activities someone enjoys to motivate them from within. When the opportunity to create ChildServe greeting cards came about, Andrea's team helped get her involved.

“I knew Andrea enjoyed sketching and had seen some of her work, which was outstanding. It was really exciting to see her get into her creative element. The finished project was something she was very proud of,” says Ashley Paulsen, a recreational therapist.

### *Want to see Andrea's artwork in person?*

Andrea's greeting cards, as well as cards designed by four other children, are available for purchase at the welcome desks at each ChildServe location.



## Stepping Up

Thanks to the generosity of Prairie Meadows and the Chris Norton Foundation, ChildServe purchased an incredible new piece of equipment: the RT600 Stepper. ChildServe is one of only three pediatric rehabilitation providers in the United States to have this cutting-edge technology.

The stepper helps children and young adults strengthen muscles and re-learn to walk by delivering an electrical stimulus to the muscles through electrodes, while bearing a portion of their body weight.

“The muscles contract in patterns that mimic walking. This strengthens not only the muscles, but also the connection to the brain and spinal cord that controls walking,” says Carrie Van Quathem, MSPT, director of pediatric rehabilitation at ChildServe.

Children with a wide range of conditions can benefit from the stepper, including those with developmental delays or lifelong conditions like cerebral palsy, or those recovering from an accident, injury, surgery or illness.



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**OUR MISSION:**

We partner with families to help children with special healthcare needs live a *great* life.

If you have an update to your contact information or would like to be added or removed from our mailing list, please contact Roxanne Wicks at 515-727-1480 or roxannw@childserve.org.

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**THE KIDS**

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