
CENTER FOR DISABILITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

Possibilities in Education and Training

A quarterly publication of the Center for Disabilities and Development, Iowa's University Center for Excellence on Disabilities at University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital, Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1011

Desire, Spirit, and Advocacy Lead to Fulfilling Life for Glenwood Man

Mike Hoenig, Project Director, Conner Training Connection



Graphic: Brady Werger and Iowa State University Basketball Coach Steve Prohm

When I sat down to interview Brady Werger for this story, I'd prepared all the usual questions. "How did you learn about the Money Follows the Person program?" "What activities do you enjoy, and what do you like about living in the community?" Though we would eventually touch on those topics, Brady had something else on his mind.

"Don't you want to know where I came from and how I got here?" he wanted to know. As soon as I said "Yes," we were off and running. The "rest of the story" is in Brady's words.

"I moved to the Glenwood Resource Center (GRC) in 2011. Before that, I lived at a neurorestorative facility for people with brain injury in Carbondale, IL. When I lived there, I had trouble managing my anger. I attacked people, and staff had to call the police twice because they couldn't manage my behaviors. After my second trip to jail, my parents decided it was time to move me back to Iowa. At first, neither Resource Center accepted me. Thanks to my dad's advocacy, I was eventually placed at GRC.

"At first, things weren't much better at GRC. I ran away, attacked staff, and injured myself. Fortunately, a counselor helped me work through a lot of issues which weren't easy to talk about. Being able to discuss them helped me handle my anger management problem."



Graphic: Brady with his parents Tammy and Bill

"As my anger management improved, I ran into another problem. My gait became uneven, and I drug my feet. People thought I was faking it, but I knew it had something to do with my medication. Still, I was down on myself. Once my neurologist adjusted my meds, I began to walk normally again. The teasing went away, and I started getting jobs at GRC."

"I always knew that I wanted to live in the community. When I heard about an opening in a Family Support and Outreach Services waiver house, I spoke up and asked to fill the vacancy. Several GRC staff, including Heath, Patrick and Clint, advocated for me and helped me get ready to move. I started visiting the house once a week, then twice a week. The visits went well, and the move was approved after several months."

"Money Follows the Person (MFP), a Medicaid program which supports people like me to move from large facilities to the community, assisted me along the way. Staff helped me work on my goals, bought my new furniture, and made sure that my move to the community went smoothly."

"It's been a good move for me. I love the freedom of going to choir practice without having to be assessed and get permission like I did when I was living at GRC. I like having people in my life who care about me, other than family and paid staff."

"Living in the community has also given me the confidence to ask for what I need and taught me that people are willing to help. I joined a local church and asked if I could help by playing my guitar. Now, I'm in two praise bands. When our pastor, who was one of my best advocates, left our church, people came up to me and asked how they could help me. I now have 10 or 11 volunteers who take turns driving me to church."

"Because so many people have helped me, I want to be able to help others through advocacy. Recently, I had a great conversation with my state senator about important disability issues. I plan to go to ID Action's Advocating for Change Day so I can talk to more legislators. I'm excited that I'm able to tell my story through this article, and that I'll be able to share it at an MFP Partners meeting in March."

"My advice to readers of this article is to advocate for yourself. Reach out to different agencies and learn what's out there. If you don't advocate, you won't receive the things that you want."

In this author's mind, Brady knows of what he speaks.



Graphic: Brady (second from right) with the praise band from Grace United Methodist church in Glenwood

Meet Mitch DeFauw, CDD's New Disability Resource Librarian



Graphic: *CDD's new Disability Resource Librarian Mitch DeFauw*

On February 27, CDD's Disability Resource Library (DRL) welcomed Mitch DeFauw as its new specialty librarian. A native Quad Citian, Mitch received his BA in English and creative writing from Luther College in Decorah and his MA in Library and Information Sciences from the University of Iowa.

"When I graduated from Luther," Mitch explains, "I still was unsure of my career path. After exploring a few jobs, I took a position at the Rock Island Public Library. After a very short time there, I knew that I'd found my calling. When I began work on my Master's in Library and Information Sciences at Iowa, I thought I wanted to be a college librarian. A course in public librarianship, however, changed all that."

Mitch's path to CDD is a serendipitous one. "After graduating in June of last year, I worked as the assistant youth and teen services librarian at the North Liberty Public Library," he tells me. "When my wife, who is doing a dual residency in family medicine and psychiatry here at Iowa, told me about the open DRL position, I applied immediately. I've always admired the work of UI Children's Hospital, and I felt it would be an honor to work for such a fine organization. I'm glad I now have that opportunity!"

Mitch's personal and professional experiences around children and adults with disabilities make his new position very important to him. "I want to give all of our patrons ease of mind when they access our library services," he says.

Though only on the job for three weeks at the time of this writing, Mitch has some well-thought-out priorities for the DRL. "I want it to no longer be Iowa's best-kept secret," he tells me with conviction. "We are the largest resource for this kind of material in the state of Iowa, and we need to let people know we're out there." Other priorities include making the library as accessible as possible, adding stories which include children with disabilities which would be of interest to any child, hosting fun events in conjunction with CDD's Thursday night clinic, and expanding the

collection to include titles in multiple languages. “I believe a library’s collection showcases its values, and I want patrons across the state to know that we value individuals representing all identities,” says Mitch.

You’ll be hearing more from Mitch in future issues of *Possibilities*, as he plans to continue our long tradition of posting titles of interest from the DRL. I’m looking forward to seeing his creativity shine through in those columns.

“If it doesn’t challenge you, it doesn’t change you.”

– *Fred Devito*

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