

headway



BREAKING THROUGH BARRIERS

PIONEERING BRAIN
INJURY REHABILITATION

also inside:

Q&A WITH STEPHANIE SCHMID | BRINGING SOUL TO ON WITH LIFE | PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE
CELEBRATE LIFE | REPORTS FROM THE COMMUNITY | SONYA'S STORY

On With Life, Inc. headway magazine

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Photo by Brice Musgrove, Images by Brice

From left: Eileen Doyle and Julie Fidler Dixon at On With Life

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a letter from our CEO

Preparing to retire after 23 years, I can't help but reflect on On With Life's progress since 1994.

Then... On With Life was a single entity – one corporation with one fledgling rehabilitation program in one setting with 70 staff members.

Today... On With Life encompasses four corporations with six distinct service lines (soon to be seven with the addition of residential neurobehavioral services) in multiple locations with more than 250 staff members.

Then... On With Life had just accepted its first person in coma (now called Disorders of Consciousness) in hopes that an intensive rehabilitation program could make a difference.

Today... On With Life staff members are specialists in serving this population, have engaged in major research projects, composed the training materials on DOC for the Academy for the Certification of Brain Injury Specialists and have gained a national reputation for this work.

Then... On With Life had not yet applied for accreditation; staff members studied the literature for best practices to develop programming.

Today... On With Life is CARF accredited in four service categories, and our inpatient program is the only program in the world outside of a hospital in its category accredited to serve both children and adults with brain injury. On With Life staff members speak at national conferences, serve on national boards and have been selected as participants on a nationally chartered committee developing guidelines for brain injury rehabilitation services.

Despite all of our growth and development, some things remain the same – the way we are “joining hands, hearts and minds” and “passionately serving and relentlessly advocating to create life-enriching opportunities” for persons living with brain injury.

It will soon be time for me to get “on with life,” and it will be with eternal gratitude for all of the On With Life joys, challenges and experiences that have so enriched my life. Thank you to each one of you who has contributed to such a life-changing journey. It has been the honor of my career to serve this amazing organization!

Julie Fidler Dixon, CEO

September 15

On With Life Brain
Injury Rehabilitation
Conference

FFA Enrichment Center
Ankeny, IA

September 29

Celebrate Life
Fundraising Event

FFA Enrichment Center
Ankeny, IA

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Karen Tylka participates in On With Life's Outpatient Neuro Rehabilitation boxing class. Boxing can reduce many of the symptoms of Parkinson's disease and improve quality of life. The boxing class is an additional wellness program available to our LSVT BIG and LOUD graduates.



The dsmHack team develops the virtual brain for On With Life's website.

Hackathon Builds Virtual 3D Brain for On With Life

We are excited to announce a new addition to our website – a virtual interactive brain – created by dsmHack, a local nonprofit organization. The virtual 3D brain highlights 19 sections of the brain, a description of what happens when that section becomes damaged and, in the works, videos from On With Life staff on rehabilitation in action.

More than 80 volunteers participated in dsmHack's 48-hour "hackathon" challenge, where tech experts catered to the needs of 10 local nonprofit organizations building websites, smartphone apps and databases.

"Educating our persons served, families, staff and community members on brain injury rehabilitation is an important part of our work at On With Life," said Corey Morrison, chief strategy and development officer at On With Life. "This innovative addition to our website serves an important educational purpose and showcases our unique approach to rehabilitation."

Visit [On With Life's website onwithlife.org/brain](https://onwithlife.org/brain) to see the virtual brain, videos and names of the tech experts that made it happen.



Tammy and Nicole, PTA, bike through Tammy's home neighborhood.

Virtual Biking Experience Allows Persons Served to Travel the World

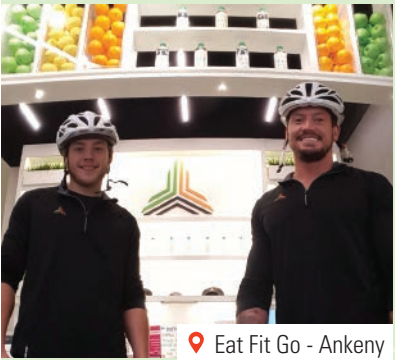
On With Life is proud to be the only organization in the United States to trial the jDome, an interactive therapy bike that allows persons served to virtually bike anywhere in the world.

Camanio Care, a Swedish research company with a vision to provide technology and a better quality of life for individuals living with disabilities, chose On With Life as its U.S. partner. The jDome creates a therapy experience by allowing the user to put in any address - such as their home or a famous landmark – and travel the virtual world using the system's built in bicycle.

On With Life will be trialing the jDome over the next year in both our inpatient and outpatient brain injury rehabilitation programs. The jDome supports movement, exercise, communication and access to memories. It also has a number of therapeutic benefits to improve physical abilities, vestibular/balance therapy, vision, coordination, memory, following directions and cognitive therapy.

"The jDome has provided an opportunity for both persons served and staff to increase the meaningful purpose of therapy sessions using familiar surrounds while also incorporating cardiovascular endurance training, path finding, memory strategies, divided attention and neuro-muscular re-education," said Amy deBuhr, physical therapist at On With Life. "We get to learn so much about these individuals as they show us their homes and their communities, and that's really special."

Visit our website to learn more about the jDome: onwithlife.org/jdome



📍 Eat Fit Go - Ankeny



📍 The Iowa Clinic



📍 Glenwood State Bank and On With Life Long-Term Program

Prevention is the only CURE

#HelmetsIowa



📍 The Bridges at Ankeny

At On With Life, we promote the importance of wearing a helmet while riding bikes, motorcycles and skateboards. We're proud to live in a community where so many businesses and organizations also encourage the use of helmets. We held our second annual Wear Your Helmet at Work event to raise awareness for Iowa's absent helmet laws. After all, prevention is the only cure for a brain injury!



📍 EMC Insurance



📍 On With Life Outpatient Neuro Rehabilitation



📍 Blue Compass



Keegan out on the golf course

A LIVING MIRACLE

KEEGAN HENRY

Post-Acute Inpatient Rehabilitation

Admit: July 8, 2010

Discharge: October 8, 2011

Just hours before his high school baccalaureate, Keegan Henry fell 60 feet in an empty corn silo, bouncing off steel rebar and landing on the cement floor. Instead of graduating with his 52 classmates at Nashua-Plainfield High School, he was fighting for his life at a Waterloo hospital. He continued to fight in the hospital for seven weeks with a traumatic brain injury, a hairline pelvic fracture and lungs filled with dust and grain.

“When the air ambulance came to pick him up, the crew didn’t think he’d make the ride,” said Kathy Henry, Keegan’s mom. “But I didn’t believe them. Keegan’s a fighter, and I knew in my heart we’d pull through this. We don’t give up in our family.”

His never-give-up attitude followed him to On With Life, where he spent eight months in the Disorders of Consciousness (DOC) program, one of the longest amounts of time a person served has spent in our DOC/coma program who emerged and moved into our traditional rehab program. Kathy says Keegan’s rehabilitation was truly a team effort between Keegan, his family and the On With Life staff.

“The staff are truly amazing and extraordinary people. They were so invested in us. I saw

things in Keegan that they didn’t, and they saw improvements that I couldn’t - we made a pretty good team,” said Kathy. “Everybody was rooting for us.”

Seven years after Keegan discharged home, he still has the same fighting attitude. He does the stretches and exercises that he learned at On With Life every day. He uses a cane for walking and has some memory lapses, but overall, Keegan says he’s happy and content.

“I’m enjoying my life and every day I have,” says Keegan, who likes to spend his days watching movies, bowling, listening to music, dancing, spending time with his family and driving his golf cart around his neighborhood.

His parents marvel at his recovery after the doctors said Keegan would be a “vegetable” if he survived at all. While they call him their living miracle, they’re not surprised by his amazing recovery. “I believe it was his motivation and outlook – people believing in him and encouraging him that pulled him through,” said Kathy. “He brought us closer together as a family. We now realize how short life is, so we’re packing all we can into it.”

All three individuals in this edition’s Reports from the Community were admitted into On With Life’s Disorders of Consciousness program, a unique program that addresses the medical, physical, environmental and cognitive needs of individuals with severe brain injury. For more information, visit onwithlife.org/DOC.

DEFYING THE ODDS

JUSTINE PARADISO
*Post-Acute Inpatient
Rehabilitation*

Admit: February 6, 2012

Discharge: March 23, 2012

Five years ago, a seizure and a mysterious illness landed 24-year-old Justine (Ehlers) Paradiso in the ICU. Further testing discovered abnormalities in her spinal fluid and grey matter on her brain. Her heart stopped twice and an emergency tracheotomy was performed. Justine's prognosis was bleak; if she survived, her family was told she could spend the rest of her life in a vegetative state. She arrived at On With Life in the Disorders of Consciousness program, unable to walk or talk.

"I have absolutely no memory of On With Life, but even without remembering my time there, I have looked back on the pictures and videos," said Justine. "I know without the rehab I had at On With Life, I would never have recovered as quickly or as wholly as I did."

While Justine may not remember her time at On With Life, her family certainly does.

"She loved any therapy involving singing, swimming and especially Laughter Yoga," said Terri Sozio, Justine's mom. "Everyone was so kind and personable with her, getting her to take baby steps forward each day to help her recover."

Now six years later, Justine is celebrating her first wedding anniversary, working as a marketing manager for the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce and buying her first home with her husband, AJ.

"I picked up my life where I was before my illness, being with my family, hanging out with friends, going to White Sox games, working, reading, taking walks, going out on the river and writing poetry," said Justine. "I have made what I believe is a full recovery. I defied all the odds. No one thought I'd ever be 'Justine' again, but here I am, a walking, talking miracle."



Justine and her husband, AJ, on their wedding day.

OVERCOMING THE IMPOSSIBLE

MARILYN SNOW
*Post-Acute Inpatient
Rehabilitation*

Admit: September 11, 2014

Discharge: January 8, 2015

Outpatient Neuro Rehabilitation

Admit: January 12, 2015

Discharge: June 18, 2015



Marilyn and her fiancé, Jonathan

Marilyn Snow arrived at On With Life in a mysterious coma at the age of 19; the doctors could not identify any medical reason for it. She had been unresponsive for a month, and her family was prepared that she might never wake up. But after just six weeks at On With Life, Marilyn emerged from her coma.

"My experience at On With Life was unforgettable," said Marilyn. "The staff was amazing. They always made me feel loved and like they were proud of me."

But that doesn't always mean things were smooth sailing. She remembers crying through the pain as she walked down the halls at On With Life.

"My therapy was hard – I remember so many times wanting to quit and give up, but they wouldn't let me, and I'm so grateful for that now," said Marilyn. "They also made therapy fun, like baking dog treats for On With Life's therapy dog, Lolo."

Marilyn moved to Arkansas last year and met the love of her life, Jonathan, just one month later. They're engaged and are planning their wedding for November.

"I never would have dreamed that I would have a job, live on my own and pay my own bills," said Marilyn, who is working full time at a large national retail store. "I didn't think any of this would be possible, and it wouldn't have been without On With Life. They made me possible."

breaking through barriers

BY ABBY BOGAARDS

Eileen compliments Julie's dress and asks to see the latest pictures of Julie's three grandchildren; Julie happily obliges. They laugh and smile as if they've been friends forever. A remarkable 23-year friendship started from the perils of a traumatic brain injury. These two women are pillars in On With Life's history and are responsible for pioneering some of the biggest developments in brain injury rehabilitation in Iowa. Their stories and their legacy show the importance of breaking through barriers.

Julie Fidler Dixon, the CEO of On With Life, has always had ambitious dreams.

"I wanted to be an ACLU lawyer and fight for civil rights since I was eight years old," she said. She studied sociology and psychology with an emphasis on criminology at the University of Iowa with dreams of helping people in prison. After college, she worked at a correctional facility's work release program - possibly the first woman in the United States to hold such a position.

"That experience taught me that there was a need to help people get jobs," said Julie. She heard about a new program at Drake University in rehabilitation job placement - the first university in the world to offer this program. Another first, as she was the first person enrolled in the program.

"My boyfriend (now husband) was a graduate assistant at Drake and told me about a brand new program being developed," she said. "I cancelled my lunch date with him and promptly signed up."

That cancelled lunch date changed the trajectory of Julie's career. From that point on, her career - and her life - was devoted to individuals with disabilities. After two decades of working with those with physical disabilities, mental health issues, special educational needs and work comp injuries, Julie joined On With Life as its director of case management services in 1994 and became its first female executive director/CEO in 2000.

“I love Julie dearly; she's like a big sister to me.”



"The moment I stepped through the doors of On With Life, I recognized the essential role families play in the rehab process," said Julie. "That's what shaped my view of what's truly a person-centered approach."

It's also where she met Eileen Doyle, who had suffered an aneurysm at the age of 23. Her parents were told she wouldn't live, and she was given her last rites. Eileen, who had worked as an assistant manager at Richmond Gordon, had received rehabilitation at a couple different facilities in the Midwest and in 1991, became the fifth person ever served in On With Life's inpatient rehabilitation program.

"On With Life definitely changed my life for the better," said Eileen. "My physical therapist was the one who made me get up and walk. I still remember her 26 years later."

Eileen, who was living at a large geriatric nursing home at the time, was the first person served after Julie created On With Life's Supported Community Living program in 1998. Julie has always kept Eileen close to her heart, and that's why again she was the first person Julie called when On With Life planned to open the Apartments of Owl Creek in 2005. Eileen purposefully chose the apartment next to the Commons Room at the Apartments of Owl Creek, and appropriately so, as Julie calls her the social chair of the community. She's thriving there, exercising weekly and attending community events. Eileen also makes it a point to call Julie often to check in and each year on her birthday sings to her over the phone.

"I love Julie dearly; she's like a big sister to me," said Eileen. "She's so caring, and she really watches out for me. I think we have a really special relationship."

Julie knows how important Eileen is to On With Life; in fact, she has Eileen's permission to tell her story at every single new hire orientation. Over their 23-year friendship, Julie and Eileen have remained

close and continued to break barriers in their own ways.

As Julie plans to step down after 45 years in rehabilitation, 23 of those years at On With Life, the rehabilitation community will lose one of its finest champions and biggest advocates.

Julie's accolades are many – including the Lou Ortale National Job Placement Association Lecture award and the Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa's JoAnn Kramer Founder award. Her involvement in the brain injury community at a local, state and national level is impressive – serving on boards for the Brain Injury Association of America, the Governor's Advisory Council on Brain Injury and the Iowa Brain Injury Association. Julie has been at the helm as On With Life expanded its programs and grew its facilities to meet the needs of the brain injury community, putting On With Life on the map with other prestigious rehabilitation facilities. But one thing never wavered – her dedication to making the persons served and their families a priority. She knows that same passion will fuel On With Life forward, as the organization continues to change the landscape of rehabilitation.

"On With Life's deep and wide-ranging expertise will continue to be recognized on a larger and larger scale to fulfill the dreams of person served and families who come to us to get 'On With Life,'" said Julie. "Over the past 26 years, we've served more than 3,500 individuals from 25 states and 15 countries, and the reputation of our expertise will allow us to serve even more around the globe."

Julie's legacy will continue on through the lives of those she's impacted – the thousands of families and survivors, like Eileen. And Eileen has Julie's cell phone number to continue her tradition of calling to wish her a happy birthday.



Eileen was recognized as the 2016 Advocate of the Year by the Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa.

Julie advocating for individuals with disabilities



people making a

DIFFERENCE

Judith Oldham

Judith Oldham never intended to volunteer at On With Life. In fact, she had never heard of the organization when she moved to Glenwood two years ago. But when the local library suggested volunteering to read to the persons served at On With Life, she jumped at the opportunity.

“I’m very involved in the community – book clubs, Bible studies, volunteering at the museum – but this is now the place I feel most comfortable and I look the most forward to visiting each week,” said Judith.

Judith, who spent her career in social work, volunteers twice a week at On With Life’s Long-Term program in Glenwood, reading books to the persons served. She started with a book by Shel Silverstein – thinking that the rhythmic cadence of poetry would help ease her into reading to others. Branching out, she then started reading books

about great people of the world – Albert Einstein, Amelia Earhart and Lucille Ball.

“It’s been so fun for me as I get to know the persons served, I can tell what kinds of literature speaks to them and sparks their interest,” said Judith. “I read all kinds of wonderful stories with various interests. I love picking out books just for the individual or group I’m reading to.”

Judith knows this is something she’s supposed to be doing. She says it’s part of her calling in life.

“Just because I’m retired doesn’t mean my mission to serve others is over. Volunteering at On With Life has given me the opportunity to continue my calling,” said Judith. “I’m learning much from the persons served and gaining so much from this experience. It’s so rewarding.”



Judith reads with Lauren outside in the OWL's Nest.

Tom Friedman

In the early days of On With Life, the Board of Directors needed more financial expertise, and Tom Friedman, now president of First National Bank in Ankeny, fit the bill. Now 22 years later, Tom continues to serve on the Board of Directors for On With Life, Inc. and the On With Life Foundation, inspired by its mission and dedicated to making On With Life's one-of-a-kind rehabilitation program world class.

What does it mean to you to be on the On With Life Board of Directors?

I've served on dozens of committees and boards, and the amount of talent and intelligence in an On With Life board meeting amazes me. I'm still humbled that I'm a part of an organization like On With Life alongside some of the most remarkable, innovative people in Central Iowa. The decisions we make have an effect on every single person who enters through the doors, so I continually ask myself how the important decisions we make will impact the persons served, families and staff.

What drew you to support the On With Life mission, and what inspires you to continue doing so?

My parents taught me early on to give back to the community where I live and to support the mission and values of On With Life is a true honor. On With Life is a place where miracles happen and for me to have even a small part in that is very special. Hearing the stories of how On With Life saves lives and seeing the graduations on Facebook keep me coming back and wanting to give even more.

What makes On With Life unique?

On With Life provides a high quality service that is unrivaled by any other provider in my opinion. On With Life treats each person served as the unique individual that they are, taking time to understand what inspires and encourages them. Each staff member at On With Life is committed to helping individuals get on with their lives, and as a result, On With Life is changing lives for the better.



Tom Friedman

Principal

When On With Life was undertaking its first major expansion and renovation project in 2015, it needed a lot of support from the community. If there's an organization that knows about supporting its community, it's Principal. Principal has awarded more than \$100 million to local nonprofit organizations that are making a difference in their communities.

The \$250,000 donation, in support of On With Life's Wellness Gym, ties in well with Principal's focused efforts on healthy, strong communities. The Wellness Gym was added as part of On With Life's expansion project to give On With Life the space to offer wellness classes for persons served

and education and trainings for the community, local schools and other healthcare entities.

"Principal and the Principal Financial Group Foundation, Inc., have embraced making philanthropic investments in the communities around the globe. It's in our DNA and who we are," said Mandi McReynolds, Global Community Relations Manager at Principal. "Our goal is to help people live their best life, and On With Life does that every day."



A yoga class held in the new wellness gym, made possible by Principal.

GET TO KNOW

Stephanie Schmid
Occupational Therapist



The Schmid Family

Experience:

I've been practicing as an occupational therapist for 12 years - 8 years at On With Life and at Mayo Clinic and the Texas Institute for Rehabilitation and Research (TIIRR) before that.

Undergraduate degree:

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, Luther College 2002

Graduate degree:

Master of Science in Occupational Therapy, Washington University in St. Louis, 2004

Family:

My husband, Jason, and I have 3 girls Abigail (5), Evelyn (3) and Charlotte (1)

Three Interesting Facts:

- My youngest brother had a brain injury in 1987. I grew up being a part of his therapy, which is why I became an Occupational Therapist.
- My husband and I enjoy doing home remodeling/building projects together.
- I love to travel. Colorado is my favorite place in the U.S., but I've been to Italy twice and am planning a trip to Ireland in a few years.

Q+A

Stephanie Schmid, occupational therapist at On With Life, discusses how vision can be affected following a brain injury.



Stephanie Schmid,
OTR/L, MSOT, CBIS

Why is vision often impacted after a brain injury?

A: When most of us think about vision, we think of visual acuity (our ability to see things clearly). Eye glasses and contact lenses change visual acuity by adjusting where the incoming image meets the retina at the back of the eye. A brain injury often causes damage to the components of the visual system that are located within the brain rather than the eye itself. The visual system is complex as information from the eyes has to travel on pathways from the front of the brain, around and to the back of the brain to the occipital lobes. This complexity makes vision vulnerable to damage because of the high probability of a brain injury impacting/damaging the tracts at any point along those pathways. In addition, cranial nerves in the face can be damaged when a traumatic brain injury occurs. As a result, eye muscles may not align correctly, the eyelid(s) may be closed and unable to open, an eye may be turned inward or outward, or the pupils may be different sizes.

Q: What are frequent vision problems to watch for following a brain injury?

A: Diplopia (Double vision) is one of the most common challenges associated with cranial nerve damage and eye coordination difficulty. Each eye sends an independent image on

its pathway to the back of the brain where the information from the two eyes combines to form one image. If the eyes are aligned poorly, the brain cannot combine the information to form one image.

A **visual fieldcut** is also common when the pathways from the eyes to the brain are damaged. In cases of fieldcut, the brain isn't able to process information from a portion of each eye's visual field. As a result, the individual might miss a small portion of or the entire right, left, upper or lower portion of their vision.

Q: What should I do if I or a loved one is experiencing vision changes following a brain injury?

A: If vision therapy is needed, On With Life's occupational therapists have the clinical knowledge, expertise and technology to help. We also recommend an evaluation by an optometrist who has experience in neurologic vision challenges. In collaboration with these physicians, therapists at On With Life develop an individualized and specific vision plan which may include eye exercises, activities to build eye strength/coordination and compensatory devices such as prisms to improve eye coordination and align the eyes.

Vision therapy is available at On With Life on an inpatient and outpatient basis. Visit our website for more information: onwithlife.org.



BRINGING SOUL TO ON WITH LIFE

Take time to do what makes your soul happy.

Golfing, biking, camping, kayaking, gardening – just a few of life’s joys that are incorporated into therapy at On With Life. Our persons served work with our staff to turn their interests into their therapy sessions. They love to share their passions with our staff, and our staff enjoy learning more about each person served.



Finding

Captain Sonya Brekke loves a good challenge. She served as a commander in the Iowa National Guard, her company's first female leader. She holds dual master degrees in Human Trafficking and Narcotics and Homeland Security. She rode RAGBRAI for 10 years. But none of that prepared her for her biggest challenge yet — overcoming a traumatic brain injury.

A WOUNDED WARRIOR'S JOURNEY TO RECOVERY

Sonya and her son, Dalton Weber, after a CrossFit Competition, one hobby she began after her brain injury.

a New Normal

After serving her country on a deployment to Iraq in 2011, Sonya returned home to Iowa and began to experience dizzy spells, daily headaches, forgetfulness and was unable to multi-task. As an officer in the military, those things were frustrating and out of character for her.

"I'm a strong, confident female leader. I led a team of hundreds of soldiers into battle, but I couldn't remember where I left my car keys," said Sonya. "I felt like I was losing control."

Despite her best attempts, she couldn't overcome her challenges and was discharged later in 2011 from the military with a Purple Heart and Bronze Star. Although Sonya shows no physical signs of injury, she is a wounded warrior, diagnosed

Sonya handed out Christmas presents to children in Iraq.

initially with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder before later being correctly diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury (TBI).

"I was devastated to leave the military – it was my whole world," said Sonya, who joined the military at the age of 17 and served for 23 years, including deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. "I left with no job, no benefits – I almost lost everything I had."

She slowly began putting her life back together, one piece at a time. She began receiving services through On With Life's Supported Community Living program, where she has explored activities to help her manage her balance and vestibular difficulties, learned coping skills for her brain injury and added strategies to stay focused on her goals. Her goals are created with her - riding her bike in preparation of a return to RAGBRAI, attending CrossFit classes and running a successful clothing boutique - and they're all crafted to help return her to the life she wants to live.

"I'm finding that this new life looks a little different than I imagined. I've grown a lot over the past few years and realized that I can still have an impact and I can still be a leader in a new way," said Sonya.

"My life now is just as full and fulfilling as it was prior to my brain injury."

Another major step in finding her new normalcy was returning to work, something Sonya found immense pride and purpose in prior to her brain injury. She now works at On With Life as a transporter, making sure persons served get to the right place for their therapy sessions at the right time. She's taken the position to a new level, taking extra time to visit with the persons served and families in their rooms, stopping to talk to individuals in the hallway and engaging in conversation as she walks down the hallway with them. Her experiences as a brain injury survivor enhances her role at On With Life and her ability to interact with the persons served in a new way. She also serves as an inspiration for persons served and their families, as she encourages them to find their new normal, just like she has.

"On With Life has helped me become a valuable member of my community again, and now, I'm able to give back to others," she said. "I'm able to take my experiences as a brain injury survivor and as a wounded warrior and advocate for them to get the services and treatment they deserve."

One way she's giving back is by volunteering in the Wounded Warrior program. Sonya found solace and help in the Wounded Warrior program and has now made it her mission to ensure other soldiers with traumatic brain injuries get the help and access to resources that she did.

"After my TBI and discharge from the military, I was lost for a while. But now, I have found my new normal. I find new things I want to do all the time. I'm rock climbing, paddle boarding and volunteering," said Sonya. "This is a different life than I envisioned, but it's meaningful and fulfilling, and that's what's most important to me."

For more information on our Supported Community Living program, visit our website: onwithlife.org/SCL.



Sonya Brekke
Supported Community
Living Program





a note from our development specialist

Throughout my rewarding first 18 months at On With Life, I have met and talked with some amazing friends and supporters of this life-changing not-for-profit organization. It has truly been my pleasure to get to know each of you who care about our persons served and our programs. Please see the highlights below and on the following page for some tangible examples of many who care.

As we continue to partner with individuals and organizations who make a difference in our work, we look forward to doing more and more to help those living with brain injury. And, while On With Life exists because of our persons served, families and extraordinary clinical team, philanthropic support certainly impacts access to specialized therapy equipment and support services both now and into the future. We are beyond grateful to those who donate and make an impact on the lives of those we are privileged to serve.

I would welcome the opportunity to connect with you in regard to how your individual passions might align with On With Life's fundraising initiatives. I can be reached at **(515) 289-9611** or **sara.wilson@onwithlife.org**.

Sara Wilson

Sara Wilson, *Development Specialist*



O'Donnell & Friends Open Benefits On With Life

What started as a social golf outing for family and friends in 1994 has grown to raise more than \$1,100,000 for charities through the years for charities in Greater Des Moines. On With Life, along with Courage League Sports, were the recipients of the 2017 O'Donnell outing, and each organization received more than \$50,000. On With Life will use the funds to help develop our outdoor therapeutic grounds project with the addition of a central pavillion.

"What an amazing gift not only to our organization but to the whole community," said On With Life CEO, Julie Fidler Dixon. "The legacy of the O'Donnell family and this fundraiser touches so many lives, and we were grateful and humbled to be a part of it this year."

Did you know ...

the On With Life Foundation launched an **annual fund** this year? Contributions to this fund provide flexible, unrestricted dollars to ensure our persons served have the equipment, services and environment necessary to succeed. We appreciate your consideration in supporting our mission!



240

of Donors
as of 6/30/17



GOAL!

Make a difference, and help us reach our goal!
onwithlife.org/donate

30%

as of 6/30/17



While each gift to the **Annual Fund** is appreciated, individual donors who contribute \$1,000 or more will receive membership into the **Circle of Life Society**, which includes special recognition and benefits.

18

Circle of Life
Members

Our garden is growing!

The Therapeutic Grounds project at On With Life's Ankeny campus is developing, thanks to the help of many partners and contributors. Grants and donations of at least \$10,000 include the following:

- The Meinders Foundation and Mo and Jacque Grotjohn have committed \$77,000 to help with grounds prep work and to name the butterfly garden after volunteer Janelle Conley.
- The O'Donnell & Friends Open raised more than \$50,000 to support the central hub pavillion.
- DuPont Pioneer donated \$50,000 to help construct the exterior pathways.
- Polk County Farm Bureau, Iowa Farm Bureau and Farm Bureau Financial donated \$30,000 to name the agricultural exploration area.
- American Prosthetics and Orthotics committed \$25,000 to name the putting green.

- Grants totaling \$22,500 from Prairie Meadows will support the enabling garden and the all-inclusive playground.
- The SCI CAN Foundation granted \$20,000 for outdoor therapy equipment.
- Variety - the Children's Charity awarded a \$20,000 grant for the all-inclusive playground.
- Howard Charitable Foundation committed \$10,000 to support the therapeutic grounds project.

With half of the needed dollars raised to date, philanthropic support is essential to complete this one-of-a-kind project, and naming opportunities are still available.

To learn more, visit onwithlife.org/therapeutic-grounds or contact our Foundation at **(515) 289-9611**.

On With Life relies on individuals and organizations and appreciates the support of many volunteers throughout the year.

- The **SCI CAN Foundation** and **Group Benefits, Ltd.** donated \$36,000 for a new FES bike, an electrical stimulation bike that will be used at On With Life's inpatient and outpatient programs to assist individuals in performing functional tasks like transferring, rolling, walking, reaching or standing.
- The **Rotary Club of Des Moines** provided a \$5,300 grant to purchase a FITLIGHT Trainer System, which uses light stimuli to enhance sensory processing and motor skills.
- A third grade class at **Northeast Elementary** in Ankeny's third grade class donated blankets for our persons served.
- **Meredith Corporation's** 24-hour Sew-A-Thon donated 80 pillow cases for our persons served.
- **dsmHack** volunteers built a 3D brain for On With Life's website to be used as an educational resource for our persons served and their families.
- **Knights of Columbus** local councils donated proceeds from their Tootsie Roll Drive to be used for our persons served at Ankeny and our long-term program in Glenwood.
- The **Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute** selected On With Life as a nonprofit partner; we received assistance from a team to conceptualize and funds to support the music zen garden.
- **Webspec Design** provided a \$5,000 grant for our therapeutic grounds project.
- **Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Iowa** supported our all-inclusive playground with a \$2,500 grant.
- Our **volunteers** give an average of 15-20 volunteer hours each month. Congrats to those who have the most cumulative hours - Darrel Webb (2,000 hours) and Al Cole (1,000 hours)!

To learn more about the ways to support On With Life, visit www.onwithlife.org or contact our Foundation at **(515) 289-9611**.

On With Life is excited to announce our third annual fundraising and recognition event, Celebrate Life.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR:

Starry Night

A CELEBRATION OF *On With Life's* STARS

Funds raised through the Celebrate Life event help enhance life-changing specialized therapy for persons served – the true shining stars. With philanthropic support, the On With Life Foundation is able to ensure persons served have the equipment and the environment necessary to maximize their potential.

Contributions to this year's event will enhance On With Life programs through support of the outdoor therapeutic grounds project, specialized therapy equipment and family support needs.

Individuals and businesses are invited to help make Celebrate Life a success by sponsoring the event and/or joining us for the evening! It will be a true celebration, and the evening will be full of food, drinks, music and powerful stories.

Honorary Chairs

What a tremendous honor I was given when I was asked to serve as an honorary co-chair for On With Life's Celebrate Life event! I eagerly became involved with the Celebrate Life event as a way to give back to On With Life for all they continue to do to assist in my



recovery from Post Concussive Syndrome. I have witnessed firsthand the miracles that happen on a daily basis at On With Life; they truly carry out the meaning of their name by helping all Persons Served get 'On With their Life!'

The Celebrate Life event is a wonderful way for supporters to celebrate and honor all the stars of On With Life.

- Michelle Pett

It is a true honor to serve as a co-chair for On With Life's Celebrate Life event. A year ago, my brother was in the midst of his five-month stay at On With Life following a traumatic brain injury. Although a resident of



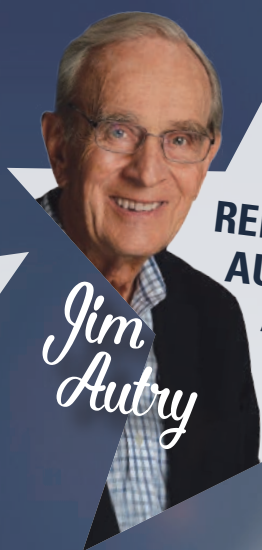
Greater Des Moines for the past decade, I was not aware of the organization. Yet today I can't seem to share the mission with enough people. Supporting the event as a co-chair allows me to not only honor my brother and his ongoing recovery, but to support the many persons served to follow. My family and I will be doing all we can for as long as we can.

- Andrea Woodard

**FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER 29
6 P.M.**

**FFA ENRICHMENT CENTER
ANKENY**

**BE
INSPIRED
BY A BRIEF AWARDS
PROGRAM AND
A MEANINGFUL
CELEBRATE
LIFE VIDEO**



*Jim
Aubry*

**HEAR
FROM
RENOWNED
AUTHOR
AND ON
WITH LIFE
ADVOCATE**

CELEBRATE LIFE
Starry Night



A CELEBRATION OF On With Life's STARS

**TAKE
PART
IN
THERAPY
DEMONSTRATION
STATIONS**



**FOR MORE
INFORMATION,
VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
ONWITHLIFE.ORG/CELEBRATELIFE**

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AND BID
ON INTRIGUING
AUCTION
ITEMS**

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15

2017

FFA Enrichment Center
DMACC Campus
Ankeny, Iowa

KEYNOTE SPEAKER :

Leif Leaf, Ph.D. – “Brain Injury as a Chronic Condition: More than Surviving, Thriving!”

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 power of music in the rehabilitation journey, healthcare reform, the complexity of concussions, understanding severe brain injury and a family panel discussing the challenges and successes following a brain injury.

COST:

\$65 Early bird registration by August 25. **\$75** after August 25. Other CEU fees may apply

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER, VISIT:

onwithlife.org