

# SHARING OUR STORIES



Spring 2019 | Issue 05

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# Building Confidence

## Letter From John LeBlanc



I was in junior high when I experienced my first time away from home at camp. I remember swimming in the northern Minnesota cold water, sand everywhere, the mosquitoes, the s'mores, and slipping into a warm sleeping bag in the lower bunk. I loved it!

I also remember feeling a sense that I was growing up, a sense of increasing independence. Camp is where I grew in self-confidence as a young adult; as I made new friends and tried new activities. At camp I felt supported by the staff who truly took an active interest in my well-being.

Recently I spoke with a mother whose son has been attending True Friends Camp Friendship for over 20 years. In my conversation with her about his time at camp she made a comment that made me pause.

**“Camp Friendship helped us practice transitions towards independence,” she said. “I never thought anyone else could take care of our son until Camp Friendship.”**

This statement is probably true of many parents; and it is especially true of parents who happen to have a child with some sort of special need. Parents who may question the ability of their child in a setting absent of their physical presence, guidance, and instruction. Parents who may also question the ability of themselves to trust and have confidence in others to care for their loved one.

From volunteers, to staff, to guests and their families, True Friends provides the opportunity for growth; to practice independence in a safe and welcoming environment.

We hope you and your loved ones take the opportunity to grow in self-confidence.

## Vision

A world where experiences and adventures are open to individuals of all abilities.

## Mission

Provide life-changing experiences that enhance independence and self-esteem for children and adults with disabilities.

## Values

Empowerment  
Experience  
Integrity  
Safety  
Sustainability

# A Family Riding Together



Shari (left), Alayna (right) at one of her first sessions in 2016.

After almost three years with True Strides, Alayna Craven has become an experienced rider. She loves horses, riding, and wearing her boots, but nothing beats riding her horse companion, Glitterman, as fast as she can.

“Alayna loves it here,” said Amanda, Alayna’s mom. “All you have to say is, ‘You are going to see Glitterman,’ and she will even eat her dinner fast if she knows she is going to see him.”

For Alayna, being at True Strides for hippotherapy makes her feel like she is there to play, not to work.

“They are there to ride a horse, that’s playing,” said Amanda. “They have swords and you put rings on swords, and you play basketball on your horse. Those things just don’t seem like work, but there’s a reason why they are doing it that they just don’t realize.”

Over the past few years the entire Craven family has connected through their mutual love of horses and horseback riding.

Amanda, and her husband Luke, along with their three children Victoria, Alayna, and Charles have each taken up the activity and now Alayna can ride alongside her siblings.



Luke and Alayna (right) enjoy riding Glitterman outdoors in the summer, with the support of True Strides staff (left).

“She gets to do what everybody else at our house does,” said Amanda. “Tori rides and she’s been doing some horse shows, Charlie started doing horse shows too.”

Alayna’s other riding companion at True Strides is her dad Luke.

“He loves to ride, and it is a special bonding time for him and her. It’s something they get to do together, and he looks forward to it every week,” Amanda said. “There are times when Donna or Shari will jump on the horse because they want to do certain things but they’ve also been working with Luke to show him to do those certain things.”

Alayna couldn’t help but smile at every mention of riding, or of Glitterman.

“When it comes to riding and seeing the joy she gets from it, it’s never something that we think twice about, ‘Oh we have to do this, it’s we get to do this and we are excited for this,’” said Amanda. “She just loves to ride. We love True Strides and everybody there and what it means to us all.”

To learn more about True Strides Horse Therapy go to [truefriends.org/true-strides](http://truefriends.org/true-strides) or call 952.852.0126.

# Supporting True Friends

True Friends serves individuals with disabilities, providing children and adults of all ages and abilities the opportunity for experiences and adventures outside of their day-to-day lives.

The success of True Friends is due in part to the dedication and commitment of over 2,500 donors who support individuals with disabilities. These donors give their time, talents, and financial support. True Friends works with a variety of individual donors to support their philanthropic goals, as well as large group donors that all work together for a common goal. True Friends is extremely thankful for the support received from all donors.

## Dance with Courage Reaches \$250,000 Milestone

On January 27, 2019, the 13th annual Dance with Courage dance marathon fundraiser event raised more than \$28,000 for True Friends, surpassing the \$250,000 milestone in total raised for True Friends.

The Dance Arts Centre dance studio, located in Chanhassen, has been an incredible supporter of campers with disabilities. Dancers fundraise to help campers attend camp each summer. The 2019 event was held at the Eden Prairie Center and welcomed over 500 people to the mall to experience this unique and engaging event.

To learn more information about the event visit [www.dancewithcourage.org](http://www.dancewithcourage.org).



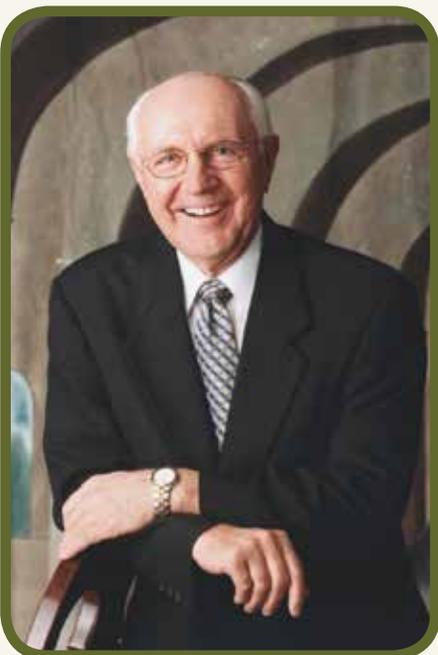
Emcee Tom Butler (left), participant Amy (right).

## Norman C. Skalicky Foundation and Stearns Bank Donate \$100,000 to True Friends

True Friends recently received a \$100,000 donation from the Norman C. Skalicky Foundation and Stearns Bank to benefit general operations. Beyond keeping the lights on, general operations support program development and critical infrastructure initiatives to provide exceptional care for individuals participating in True Friends programs and services.

“Stearns Bank has always been passionate about giving back to the community, even more so to those needing a helping hand,” Skalicky said. “The work of True Friends to enhance self-esteem and independence aligns well with our mission to help foster growth and success.”

In addition to providing life-changing experiences for participants, True Friends also offers caregivers respite; a chance to rest and relieve the stress that sometimes occurs while caring for individuals with special needs. We are deeply grateful for the support from the Norman C. Skalicky Foundation, which will help strengthen all of our programs.



Norman C. Skalicky

To learn how you can make a difference visit [truefriends.org/giving](http://truefriends.org/giving), call 952.697.2290, or email [giving@truefriends.org](mailto:giving@truefriends.org).



Troy loves to travel. From a helicopter ride over the Grand Canyon (left) to going for a walk in Hawaii (right), he loves seeing the world.

Nearly every other year Troy Hunstad has been traveling all around the United States through customized trips with Ventures Travel. From the Grand Canyon to Key West to Hawaii, Troy is an experienced traveler.

He loves the journey of traveling, the activities and adventures, the food, and most of all the palm trees. "Hawaii was my favorite," Troy said. "I love the palm trees. I like it when Bob and I sat by the ocean on the beach."

Through the support of his caregivers at REM, his loving family, and the customized travel options available at Ventures Travel, Troy is able to see the world.

"Ventures Travel really takes the fear out of traveling," said Marlys Melton, a Program Supervisor from REM. "The trips are so well laid out that we can prepare Troy for each day of the trip, so he knows what to expect."

Troy is an outdoorsman, he likes wide-open spaces, fishing, and just being outside enjoying nature.

During a visit to Key West in 2015 Troy went parasailing, air boat riding in the Everglades, swimming with dolphins, and even caught a trigger fish while near-shore fishing. In 2017 Troy visited the Grand Canyon and had his first helicopter ride and even drove around a Utility Task Vehicle (UTV) in the desert.

"It's full quality of life care," said Marlys. "He wouldn't be able to experience all that he has seen and done without Ventures Travel."

Although Troy was in Hawaii at the end of 2018, he is already planning his next trip. "I'd like to go to Denver, Colorado," said Troy. "I really like camping and fishing. And I love palm trees."

Contact Ventures Travel to learn more about great custom and group travel opportunities.

## Upcoming Trips

Mall of America Weekend

May 3-May 6, 2019

Disneyland and California

May 13-May 17, 2019

Las Vegas and Hoover Dam

May 20-May 24, 2019

Minnesota Twins Weekend

May 24-May 27, 2019

Elvis Festival, Lake George, NY

May 30-June 3, 2019

San Francisco and Santa Cruz

June 5-June 10, 2019

Branson, MO

June 6-June 12, 2019

Medora, ND - The Old West

June 13-June 18, 2019

Joyful Noise Family Festival

June 14-June 16, 2019

Wisconsin Dells

June 17-June 21, 2019

Minnesota Twins Extravaganza

June 24-June 28, 2019

## To Learn More

### Website

[venturestravel.org](http://venturestravel.org)

### Phone

866.692.7400

### Email

[lmoore@venturestravel.org](mailto:lmoore@venturestravel.org)

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# Volunteer with True Friends



Participant Patrick (left),  
volunteer Gabby (right).

Every year True Friends welcomes 400+ youth, adults, groups, and family volunteers who contribute over 20,000 service hours. The hours provided by volunteers save True Friends over one million dollars every year.

Support from volunteers like Gabby is invaluable. "I started volunteering because I wanted to challenge myself with a community I was unfamiliar with," Gabby said. "The more I volunteered, the more I grew. I learned patience, trust, and how to be more kind."

Volunteers return time and time again to help make True Friends programs extraordinary. They assist directly with campers at summer and winter camp and year-round weekend respite. They are school and corporate groups working with facilities to keep our sites maintained.

Volunteers are professionals who assist in fundraising and organizational management. They are retirees who come with a lifetime of skills.

The one thing True Friends volunteers have in common is a passion to help others. Volunteers who spend a couple of hours or an entire summer with True Friends help fulfill an inspiring mission to provide life-changing experiences for children and adults with disabilities.

To learn more about volunteering visit [truefriends.org/volunteer](http://truefriends.org/volunteer), email [volunteerservices@truefriends.org](mailto:volunteerservices@truefriends.org), or call 952.852.0101 ext. 399.

## 2019 Volunteer Opportunities

**Summer Camp Dates**  
**Camp Friendship:**  
First week is June 15  
Ages 14+

**Camp Courage:**  
Adult Retreat  
August 11-17 or 11-21

**Camp Eden Wood:**  
Day Camp Only  
(Monday-Friday)

**Camp Courage North**  
Ages 18+ only

Spring Respite Weekends are open to anyone 18+ or 16+ if you've successfully volunteered with summer camp.

## 2019 Camp Registration is Open!

Camp is only a couple months away and True Friends is excited to welcome you for another life-changing summer experience.

True Friends provides campers with the opportunity to explore their interests, build confidence, and make connections with individuals who turn into forever friends.

See you this summer!

Learn more at [truefriends.org/camp](http://truefriends.org/camp)



# Team Building with a Personalized Approach

Team Quest is a leadership development program that provides specialized team building, high ropes, and professional development opportunities for youth and adults. Team Quest focuses on empowering individuals and teams to discover their capabilities by providing programs that stretch the boundaries of one's comfort zone to increase self-efficacy.

Individuals that participate in Team Quest come from a wide range of ages, groups, and backgrounds. No matter the group, they all come to Team Quest with a common goal: they want to have a lot of fun while learning more about themselves and their potential when working as a team.

Team Quest offers year-round programming including programs designed for the winter months. Groups are invited to visit one of three locations in Eden Prairie, Maple Lake, and Annandale, or Team Quest will travel to the group's location. Through special programming called Ropes on the Road and Archery Tag, Team Quest can join a group at a local park or at their own building.

The services offered include Traditional programs, Professional programs, and Specialty Add-On programs.



## Traditional Programs

Traditional programs allow individuals to choose their own goals and desired outcomes, while supporting the needs of individuals of all ages.

One of the most popular team-building programs is called Odyssey, which includes both ground-based challenges that focus on communication and leadership skills, as well as high ropes elements that focus on team support to encourage participants to break out of their comfort zones.



## Professional Programs

Individuals and groups seeking a more scripted program specifically designed for working professionals tend to choose one of the Professional programs.

Any one of the five indoor or outdoor programs provides professionals with opportunities to explore topics like cognitive collaboration, leveraging team strengths, building team atmosphere, and setting corporate norms and values.



## Specialty Add-Ons

To enhance any Team Quest experience check out the Specialty Add-Ons like zip-lining, Archery Tag, or one of three winter programs.

Cold-weather challenges can build on a different set of skills including fire building techniques, shelter building, and winter safety. If winter challenges don't appeal to the team, check out Archery Tag; it's like dodgeball but with foam arrows, a bow, and, of course, helmets.

## To Learn More or Book Now:

[team-quest.org](http://team-quest.org) | [tq-info@truefriends.org](mailto:tq-info@truefriends.org) | 952.852.0104 | Follow us @TeamQuestMN



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Please let us know by contacting us at 952.852.0101 or [info@truefriends.org](mailto:info@truefriends.org).

## Join Our Team

Not only do we have several long-term seasonal and year-round positions available, we are still hiring for our summer jobs and internships!

From health care, to food service, to direct care you can be part of the True Friends experience and make a difference in the lives of the individuals, families, and groups we serve.

To see a full list of positions  
or apply go to  
[truefriends.org/jobs/](http://truefriends.org/jobs/)



# WE'RE HIRING!

[www.truefriends.org](http://www.truefriends.org)

952.852.0101

[info@truefriends.org](mailto:info@truefriends.org)



@TrueFriendsCan

