

We are excited to share with you a story of how your support of The Arc of East Central Iowa has helped a young boy rise up into the man he is today. Price Strunk-Sosalla is a 28-year-old man who has risen up against many challenges to accomplish some great things in his life!

At 20 months of age this intelligent and caring young man just stopped talking. He was diagnosed with an intellectual disability, autism and attention deficit disorder. Price's early years were marked with behavior problems, aggressive tendencies and hypersensitivity to sound and light. Regardless of these challenges, Price's mom Sandra was determined to find a way for him to be his best self. Price was about 10 years old when his family moved to Cedar Rapids and he began using The Arc of ECI Respite and Group Services. He later also participated in the Supported Community Living Program, where he worked on goals such as socialization and communication. He began to meet peers and experience many community activities and events. Price participated in special school activities and was very proud of his graduation from High School and then later the Success Center.

However, Sandra worried what would be the next step for him. She was determined to find something for Price that allowed him to continue his journey of being involved in the community and that placed expectations on him. The Arc of ECI's Day Habilitation program was the perfect fit! Here Price was able to work on skills and get his first real opportunity to volunteer in the community. Although Price remained fairly nonverbal he excelled. He continued to rise to every challenge and every new opportunity that came his way. In fact, after two years he told his mom it was time for him to graduate from Day Habilitation! ***This decision would change Price's life forever.***

Price and his team got together to brainstorm next steps. The Arc's Project SEARCH nine-month vocational internship program was discussed. But not everyone on his team thought he would be a good fit. Price was barely verbal, rarely made eye contact, and had limited social skills. But Sandra and The Arc of ECI staff were convinced that, with some special accommodations, Price could do it. ***More importantly, Price wanted to try!*** Throughout his internship with Project SEARCH Price began to, as his mom puts it, "*blossom into the person he was meant to be.*" He discovered that he enjoyed washing tables and excelled working in the dining department at UnityPoint-St. Luke's Hospital. As his independence grew his personality began to blossom as well. To the amazement of all, at his graduation from Project SEARCH, Price got up and gave a speech to the entire crowd! Something no one ever imagined they would see Price do.

Following his success in Project SEARCH, Price went on to participate in The Arc of ECI's Supported Employment Program. Knowing that Price would not be able to do a verbal job interview, The Arc of ECI staff came up with the idea of creating a video resume. Crystal Group, a local business, watched his video resume, loved it and he was hired!

Currently, The Arc of ECI Job Coaches check in with Price occasionally to make sure everything is going well. Price works five days a week, he excels in casual conversations, and greets his coworkers with high fives in the hallways. ***He loves his job!*** Sandra describes Price's journey thus far as an awakening. She credits The Arc staff, calling them "*incredible human beings that have that extra something special in their hearts.*"

Despite being non-verbal for most of his life Price has also taken an interest in other cultures. He has been able to teach himself by watching YouTube videos to write and speak four languages. He says he loves the idea that people of different nationalities get together and love each other.

Will you join us in opening your heart to over 800 individuals as they work to realize their full potential? With your support we can continue to provide services that help individuals like Price to rise up! Your gift will stay with The Arc of East Central Iowa, helping to provide the same services and programming that helped Price become the man he is today. ***Price is nothing short of an inspiration as to what is possible!***

We sincerely hope you consider giving a tax-deductible gift today.
Thank you for your support!

