

A Lifeline for Izzy

How Direct Care Workers have stood with a man they are proud to call "brother"

Everyone who knows Izzy says he's a really cool guy. His fun personality is one of the reasons his Direct Care Workers love to be with him. The almost 50-year-old Mid-Michigan resident has a developmental disability and relies on the assistance of caregivers for everyday tasks.



Working with Izzy used to include help with cooking, cleaning, getting to work on time and fun social activities to help him engage. The avid sports fan likes to dress to the nines and is the life of the party.

But all that changed a few years ago when Izzy was rushed to the emergency room after not feeling well and appearing jaundiced. Unfortunately, it was discovered that Izzy had an aggressive form of cancer in his pancreas, liver and stomach. Izzy was given a poor prognosis and overnight Izzy's caretakers had to completely change their care for him and focus on intense medical treatments.

Izzy's previous support wasn't medically-focused so this was a big change for his caregivers. But Izzy wanted to stay with the same Direct Care Workers who supported him. Without hesitation, they stepped up and took on the new level of support Izzy needed.

Izzy has been through a lot of ups and downs in his cancer fight in recent years including chemo, radiation and failed surgeries. Each time, Izzy's amazing team of Direct Care Workers learns a new skillset to make sure that Izzy gets the best care possible.

Though Izzy's condition is terminal, as he goes to doctors' appointments these days, his doctors and nurses constantly comment on how healthy he looks for someone in his situation. Luckily, Izzy still feels pretty good and has a good quality of life. And that is due to his caregivers.

"Izzy is alive today because of his direct support professionals. He is a healthy man despite his cancer, because of the attention his caregivers offer," said Sarah Hubble of Independent Community Living, which coordinate's Izzy's care.

Izzy calls his Direct Care Workers his coaches and he counts and relies on them. He feels safe with them and they look over Izzy in all aspects of his life.

Michigan needs to support Direct Care Workers who are the lifeline for so many people like Izzy.

