

Friendship *First*

For Michael, Direct Care Workers deliver more than physical assistance.

Michael Hitchcock is an articulate, thoughtful man of 35. Although he endures the physical challenges associated with cerebral palsy and quadriplegia, his obvious intellectual gifts and ability to organize his own care show personal strength and a tendency toward leadership.

Today, he lives in his own home, where he receives physical support from a small, dedicated group of Direct Care Workers. Without them, Michael said he wouldn't be able to do half of the things he enjoys in his life. He's had caregivers travel with him to visit family, attend courses with him when he was in college, and even help him run his own business.

"Having people come in and help me out is very vital to me, because without them I wouldn't be able to do half the stuff I'm doing," Michael says. "They are my friends. I've watched their kids grow up, attended their weddings. Our connections are deep and ongoing."

Michael's mother, Kathi, agrees. "It's a wonderful thing to see our son out, living on his own," she says. "They handle his daily care and make an enormous difference in all of our lives. As my husband and I get older, things get less easy for us. But because of who he has become—and the loving friends who help him daily—I know that he will be cared for no matter what."



Erin is one of Michael's long-term caregivers. She's been with Michael for seven years and loves what she does. "I have a passion for it. I can't really see myself doing anything else," Erin says. "My purpose and pride are here. Michael is my friend and I'm glad to help him."

"Direct Care Workers are some of the most caring people you'll ever meet in your life. We need to get them wages so they can support their families and do what they love to do."

-Michael