

# Angels OF COURAGE RETREATS

DISCOVER HOPE  
IN THE MIDST  
OF YOUR REALITY

## A True Partnership: Dakota Medical Foundation's role in Angels of Courage Retreats By Carly Nelson

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About two years ago, a friend asked me to join him at a meeting with Dakota Medical Foundation (DMF). He was proposing a new idea to a colleague and thought it would be a good opportunity to discuss Angels of Courage Retreats. At that meeting, I had the opportunity to share our vision with Pat Traynor, who I later learned was the President of DMF.

Within a month, Pat called and asked me to further discuss our initiative. I was told it would be a real relaxed meeting just to get further insight into our plans. However, when I walked into the board room at DMF, it was apparent how important this meeting was.

Sitting around a large executive table, were six people (five of whom I had never met). While I am used to giving sales presentations on a daily basis for my job, something inside me panicked. I only had an idea... how was I supposed to sell that? Pat asked me to share my vision with the rest of the group so they could have further understanding.

I remember my heart pounding as I thought, "I don't have anything to show them! I should have had handouts!" The only material I had was my story, so I told them.

I shared that at 18-years-old my family was called into the hospital because doctors didn't think I would make it (my immune system was trying to kill me). This was after 4 years of doctors visits, of which 6 weeks were spent at Mayo Clinic. The culmination of these events led to a lupus diagnosis.

Then at 28, I was diagnosed with cancer and had to undergo major surgery followed-up by bi-yearly Dr's visits. I explained that while I never had planned this for my life, one of the things I had become an expert on was being a patient. I knew what it was like to receive one diagnosis after another and then wonder, now how am I supposed to live in the midst of this? I knew that I couldn't be the only patient who felt this way either. More importantly, I had learned

what it took to gain a positive outlook in the face of adversity and wanted to share that with others. Therefore, I joined forces with fellow cancer survivor Don Goering, who later donated 11 acres of beautiful land, and started envisioning Angels of Courage Retreats.

I remember Pat then getting up and going to the white board to outline DMF's vision and mission with one fact standing out loud and clear: since 1996, DMF has distributed approximately 775 grants totaling over \$25 million. I remember thinking, "Seriously, what am I doing here? These people are professionals! They obviously don't realize it's me sitting here?" So, in typical Carly fashion, I voiced my thoughts to the team. I remember starting to ask the question and then getting immediately teary-eyed. I tried to articulate my feelings but nothing came out. (con't on pg 2)



Pat Traynor  
President - Dakota Medical Foundation

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## A True Partnership: Con't from page 1

Finally, I asked point-blank: "Why are you helping me?"

Pat's response summed up their belief in Angels of Courage Retreats as he said, "We believe you are onto something really good and we want to be a part of it".

When I talked to Pat earlier this week, I asked him to elaborate on why he had decided to get involved with Angels of Courage Retreats. He stated, "What motivated me was the meeting with the University of Mary regarding the feasibility study. (We had engaged MA-level students to do a Feasibility Study for a Service-Learning project where they deemed the project completely feasible). I was so impressed with how you gathered the resources in our community to assist you with your project. I was moved by your story and commitment. I was motivated by this being based in faith and I was inspired by how you and Don connected...how passionate you both are about addressing the critical need that is out there."

He then asked himself, "How can we help this start-up that has serious momentum get the resources to accelerate them in the work they are doing? We need to quickly provide them with the necessary technical expertise. We need to provide them with time, talent, and treasure immediately." Therefore, he knew we would be a perfect fit to work with Impact Foundation's Institute for Innovation and Effectiveness.

DMF created Impact Foundation and the Impact Institute in 2004 to help non-profits become superior performers to better serve the

needs of our communities. The Impact Institute exists to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of area nonprofits through offering strategic planning, consulting, and fundraising training to select grant partners of DMF. Thus far, 59 nonprofits have been served and continue to be served.

Three consultants from Impact Foundation have been working with Angels of Courage Retreats for the past year and a half. They have provided customized training/consulting on effective operational strategies and efficient fundraising systems to optimize long-term sustainability resulting in a more positive impact for the people served by Angels of Courage.

DMF has also funded and coordinated the establishment of our 501 (c)(3) and will now match up to \$25,000 in contributions made on or before September 30, 2007. Checks need to be made payable to Dakota Medical Foundation with a note on the memo line stating "Angels of Courage" and mailed to Carly Nelson at 508 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue West, Unit D, West Fargo, ND 58078. DMF is working to attract many other supporters to our important mission.

Pat continued, "DMF's approach is not one where we stand back and watch to see what happens. Instead, we are a partner who does what is necessary for nonprofits to become successful and better serve society. This requires DMF to be flexible as a funding organization. We must understand that as a start-up business, there are many unexpected barriers to successfully launch an operation. If you are really commit

FAITH IS TO  
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SAINT  
AUGUSTINE

committed to a mission, you need to roll up your sleeves and be an outstanding partner, rather than a third party bystander. You need to creatively involve and engage your community networks' vast time, talent and treasure!"

While the missions of Dakota Medical Foundation, Impact Foundation, and Angels of Courage Retreats align perfectly (helping people thrive not just survive), the original idea of us partnering together was beyond my comprehension. I just couldn't understand why an organization like DMF would believe in an idea like Angels of Courage and put funds behind it?

DMF believed in us when really they didn't have to, and we thank God every day that they did support us, as they have inspired others to believe in us and join us on this journey.

To learn more about Dakota Medical Foundation, go to <http://www.dakmed.org/about/> or call 701-271-0263.

To learn more about Impact Foundation, go to <http://www.impactfdn.org>.

## Rescheduled: Afternoon of FUN for Angels of Courage Retreats Volunteers April 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2 PM!

YEAH! It's back on and we're ready to be outside! In order to say "Thank You" to the people who have expressed interest in volunteering for Angels of Courage Retreats, we have planned a fun-filled afternoon at the home of Don Goering, south of Audubon, MN.

On Sunday April 22nd, from 2-5 PM, the volunteers and their families/friends are invited for a viewing of the Retreat Center Land (weather permitting), bon fire, and treats!

Much work has been done by the Architectural Design firm Widseth, Smith, Nolting on the design concept; therefore, we want to share with those who have a vested interest in the retreat center the phenomenal work that has been done! The other major topic that will be

discussed is the areas where the most assistance is needed from volunteers and the time commitment involved in each area. Volunteer's feedback is invaluable at this point as we are still forming the overall look and feel of Angels of Courage Retreats.

If you are bringing children, we will have a few Sr. High youth on-site so that you are able to attend this portion of the event.

Directions to Don's Home (18579 175th St., Audubon, MN):

1. Take Hwy #10 East to Audubon, MN
2. Turn South on Co. Rd #11
3. Go about 2.4 miles to 190th Ave. and take a right
4. Go approximately 1 mile to

175th St. and take a left 5. Go about 3/4 of a mile to the top of the hill, where Don's house is on the south side of the road (turn left into the driveway-- 18579 175th St).

Questions? Please call Carly at 701-371-3025

We look forward to meeting all of you~

Board of Directors for Angels of Courage Retreats

Babs Coler, Carly Nelson, Don Goering, Erik Holmberg and Kathy Anderson

NEVER DOUBT  
THAT A SMALL  
GROUP OF  
THOUGHTFUL,  
COMMITTED  
CITIZENS CAN  
CHANGE THE  
WORLD; IT'S  
THE ONLY  
THING THAT  
EVER HAS.  
MARGARET  
MEAD

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

Angels of Courage Retreats will hold it's first retreat in the fall/winter of 2007 focusing on adult cancer survivors. If you would like to be involved in either the planning or execution of the first retreat, volunteers are needed in the areas of Programming, Marketing/ PR, and Site Logistics. Contact Carly Nelson at [angelsofcourageretreats@hotmail.com](mailto:angelsofcourageretreats@hotmail.com).

## CREATIVE WRITERS! Creative Writers! Creative Writers! WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Angels of Courage Retreats continues to grow and thus, we are receiving more and more opportunities to share our story.

We are currently working on our Case Statement (Extensive document defining who we are and why we exist), Website content for Ignus Technologies, and Quarterly Newsletter. While we are completing each of these projects, it is VERY time consuming as writing is not any of our strengths.

A HUGE thank you to John Messelt for helping with the January Newsletter story and the Case State-

ment! We are searching for 3-4 more highly creative people to whom writing comes naturally. Why that many people? We don't want to overburden just one person. We are going to have MANY opportunities to share our story in all kinds of media. Therefore, WE NEED HELP!!

Have you ever met someone who can just sit down and within a short time-frame write something amazing yet concise? Are you that person? Do you know anyone like that? If so, please have them contact us ASAP!

We need to focus on what we do best and leave the writing to the experts!



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## **Mission of Angels of Courage Retreats**

The mission of Angels of Courage Retreats is to create an environment that encourages those affected by chronic illness or the loss of a loved one to live life with courage.

The purpose of the organization is to create weekend retreats focusing on a specific topic. Some examples of our weekend retreats may include a retreat for adults with diabetes, parents of children with disabilities or a retreat for those who have lost a loved one.

The retreats will be created based on the feedback received from members of our community and the resources that are available to ensure success.

Our goal is to gather and share resources that exist to help individuals and families learn to thrive in the midst of their illness/loss.

It will be important to share our mission in each newsletter as more and more people learn about the purpose of Angels of Courage Retreats.

## **Contact Information:**

If you would like to learn more about Angels of Courage Retreats or if you have questions please contact:

Carly Nelson  
701-371-3025

[Angelsofcourageretreats@hotmail.com](mailto:Angelsofcourageretreats@hotmail.com)

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