



# 2023 ARRM CARES AWARD FINALIST

## ANNETTE RIPLEY LIVING WELL DISABILITY SERVICES

How can I help? This is Annette's motto. Annette recently assisted one of the people we serve with cataract surgery. Each eye required six appointments, so 12 appointments in total. Many of these fell outside of her regular work time, but that didn't matter to Annette. She accompanied her on all but one of those appointments, coordinated her medication, and took her out for coffee or lunch after many of them. One of the surgeries was scheduled for the morning we were expecting a huge snow storm. We contacted the surgery center and were told that the surgery would still take place, "unless the roof was covered with snow." Annette offered to stay at the house overnight in order to make sure she was able to get to the appointment on time. She was prepared to drive her 4-wheel drive truck in case there was too much snow. She made it to the appointment and finished out her eye surgeries. She also followed up with her new glasses appointments afterwards. This person has never been much of a TV watcher, and preferred to isolate in her room. Annette found out that she likes to watch Lifetime movies, and now that she is better able to see, she has had more of an interest in spending time in the living room watching these movies. Annette put together a zip drive of hundreds of Lifetime movies for the house (In addition to other zip drives containing other kinds of movies).

Annette has taken several people on the annual snow sledding trip to Camp Menogyn. This trip is lovely, but rustic for the best of us. She coordinates it all, from making sure that people have all the snow gear they need, that their medication is packed, and any adaptive equipment is ready. She loads people into the van with confidence, and heads for the great North. This trip often requires several bathroom breaks, often assisting someone in a wheelchair to use a public restroom, which we all know can be a huge challenge. Once they arrive, the gear and often the person served, will be transferred via sled to the cabin. It is a lot of work and Annette has made this trip several times. It is exhausting, but she recognizes what a huge benefit it has for the person she supports.

Annette is creative and always tries to make people feel seen and heard. She makes breakfast wraps with different ingredients and keeps them available in the freezer for the people served to heat up for breakfast. She also recently purchased a waffle maker for the house and keeps the freezer stocked with a variety of homemade waffles for the people served so that they always have the option of a homemade meal for breakfast. When preparing the weekly menu, everyone has input, and the opportunity to choose meals they like. She does this to give options and choices, and to ease the work for other staff. She also helps in a larger way than breakfast. We all know that we are in a staffing crisis and that our industry is hanging on by a thread. Without people like Annette, it would almost be impossible to do the essential work we do. She has covered shifts in dozens of our homes. Annette is always the first person to step in and save the day, sometimes working at houses an hour away. When asked why she is willing to do this, her answer is simple, "because they need me." Leave no room for doubt, we need her just as much.