

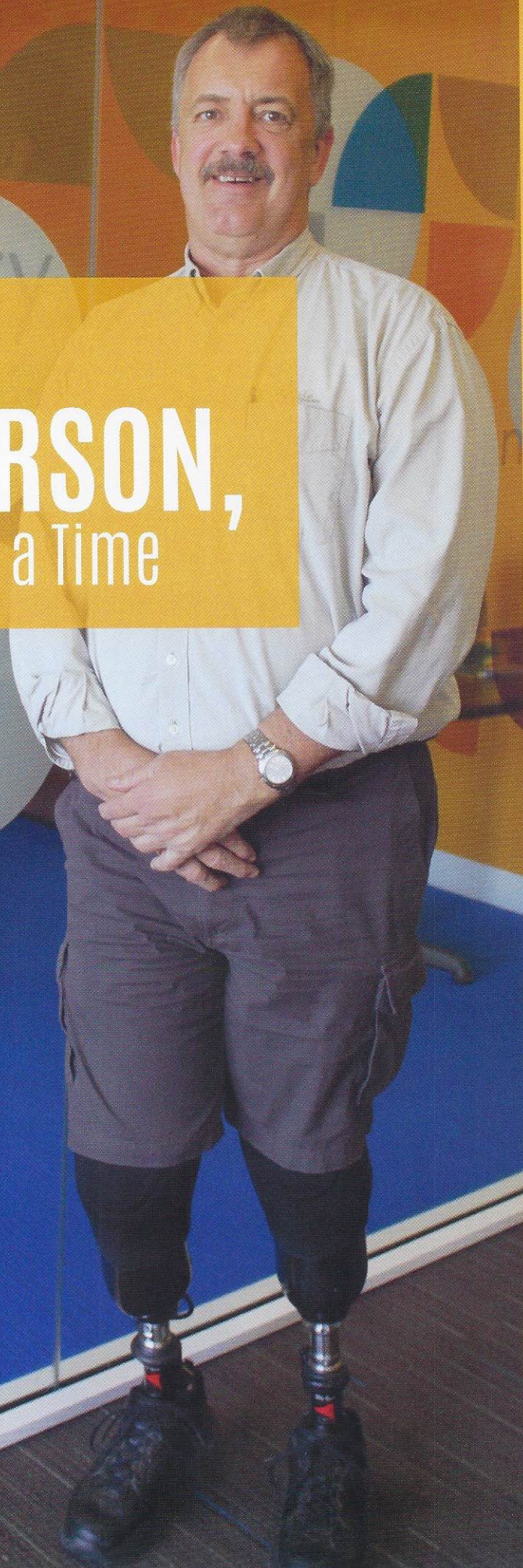
Treating The WHOLE PERSON, One Individual at a Time

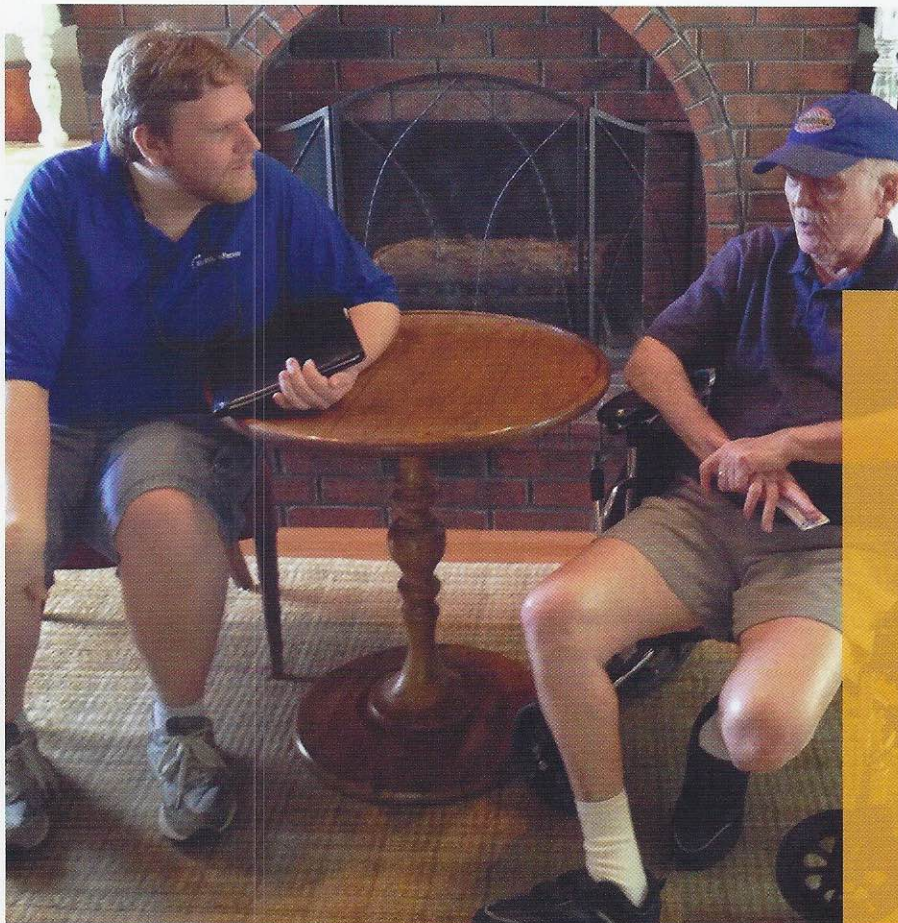
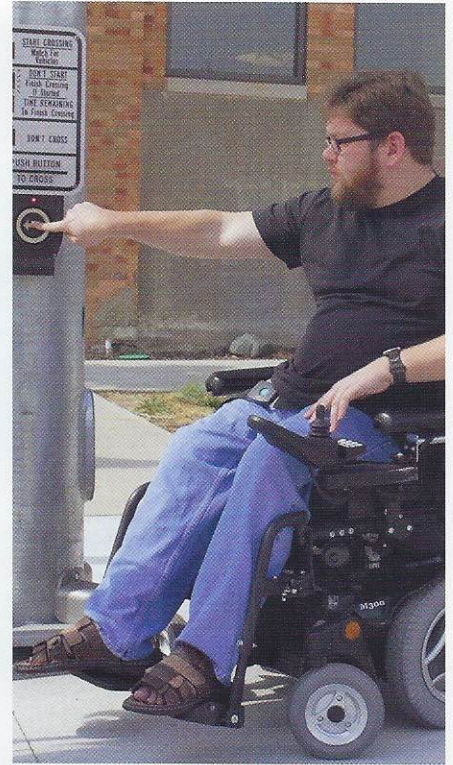
LOCAL ORGANIZATION HELPS
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
LIVE FULL, INDEPENDENT LIVES

ARTICLE KATHERINE BONTRAGER
PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED

For Jim Leach, it was a battle with bipolar disease. For Aaron Price, it was a devastating car crash that led to being paralyzed. Each man had a very different challenge that lay before him, but each was able to turn to the same place for help: The Whole Person. This incredible local nonprofit aids people with disabilities so they can live independently—all while trying to impart change within the community to expand opportunities for such independent living.

The organization reaches out to people with physical and mental disabilities, their spouses and family members, as well as schools, businesses, and local government agencies. Its aim? To connect people like Leach and Price to the support and resources they need, so that they have the choice to stay out of institutions and nursing homes and instead live meaningful, independent lives.





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For each individual, this means something different. For Leach it was managing his illness with proper medication and regular psychiatric visits.

“I credit my ongoing wellness to having found the peer support group sponsored by The Whole Person,” Leach writes. “This group allowed me to accept my illness, demonstrated that I was not alone and gave me the knowledge it is okay to be bipolar. I cannot overstate the value this has been and

continues to be for me personally as well as my family, friends, and coworkers.”

For Price, there was much to learn about coping with his injury upon his release from the rehabilitation hospital.

“I’m constantly running into new obstacles and issues,” he writes. “Thanks to the peer group at The Whole Person, I’m given the information to deal with those obstacles in a constructive, easy manner. The group also keeps me connected to the spinal cord

injury community in the Kansas City area and the activities available to us. The best part about the spinal cord injury peer group at The Whole Person is that it provides me with a safe place to talk about my injury with others who know exactly how I feel. I couldn’t think of a better place to go for answers to my questions about living with my injury, and I’m looking forward to attending many more meetings in the future.”

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This one-of-a-kind agency improved the lives of more than 2,000 individuals in 2015, in a wide range of ways. Whether it's providing up-to-date information on services and support regarding adaptive equipment, transportation, accessible housing, offering one-on-one training to help adults with disabilities develop skills needed to live independently, peer mentoring, or advocacy on the local, state and federal level, The Whole Person takes a systematic approach to tackling this very real need. Another focus for this organization? It's helped approximately 1,200 people avoid institutionalization by making them aware of real living options within the community.

Yet this is only part of the picture. The Whole Person also aids families that have children with disabilities. Be it free sign language instruction or helping high schoolers transition out of school upon graduation, the organization is there every step of the way as its participants progress through life.

Funding for this very unique program is garnered through grants, United Way campaigns and individual, foundation and corporate support. Opportunities for volunteering and financial support are always welcome, as The Whole Person seeks to empower not only its participants, but also the greater community as a whole, so that there are equal opportunities for every person.

"The Whole Person's goals are to promote empowerment, independence, self-reliance, and inclusion for people with disabilities," says Julie DeJean, CEO of The Whole Person.

For Leach and Price—and countless others—that goal is met again and again as this unique organization enables those in need, regardless of their disability, to feel whole and independent once again. It's something many of us take for granted—but something a special few ensure all of us get to enjoy.

For more information, visit TheWholePerson.org.