

"It's fun to challenge people to do things they didn't think they could do. And it's great seeing the effect you have on another person's life.

With a project like this – it's something they are always going to remember."

DAVE CHRISTENSEN



From a Spark to Fire

VOLUNTEERING AT ACHIEVE

As a volunteer, Dave Christensen is a natural.

He's humble. He is always willing to share his time with others. And he possesses a certain fire – a true dedication to helping those around him.

Thankfully for us, he's chosen to grace the people at Achieve with his volunteering spirit.

The fire began a few years back with a simple spark of inspiration. A former Vice President of engineering in St. Louis, Dave moved back to Sioux Falls to be closer to his family. He often works from home and admits that his time alone can lack the personal contact he's grown to enjoy.

"I get to meet a lot of people through volunteering," Dave says. "When you work from home, you begin to miss working with people."

In moving closer to his family, Dave found himself face to face with a volunteer opportunity. Dave's uncle, Loren Christensen, helped create a day camp opportunity for Achieve on his farm near Trent, South Dakota. With a desire for personal contact and a ready-made opportunity, it was only natural that Dave began volunteering on the farm himself.

Activities on the day camp range from work projects – such as painting or woodworking – to leisurely pursuits like fishing or horseback riding. Whatever the group is doing, however, it's instilled with a healthy dose of fun.

"It's neat to see the pride," Dave says about the camp's work projects. "Our tractor needs to be painted next year, and there are people here already excited about painting it green!"

Through his uncle's project, Dave was inspired to do more. Using his handiwork and background in engineering, Dave helped develop a program that will allow the people served at Achieve to build strong and sturdy birdhouses.

And while this plan will help bring the spirit of independence to life through simple construction, Dave is most excited about the opportunity it gives him to get to know some special people.

"It's fun to challenge people to do things they didn't think they could do," Dave says. "And it's great seeing the effect you have on another person's life. With a project like this – it's something they are always going to remember."

Dave explains that Achieve sees no limits when it comes to volunteering. There's simply no end to the possibilities. The people at Achieve are always searching for new activities and volunteer opportunities.

"Anything you're interested in can be turned into a volunteer opportunity," Dave says. "And likewise, if you're looking for a volunteer activity, Achieve will find someplace for you to be involved."

Above everything, however, is the combination of thankfulness and enthusiasm that exudes from every person served and every staff member.

"There's just a lot of good people here," Dave says. "You can't help but want to help. It's a nice environment to be in. And it's easy to get caught up in the enthusiasm."

"When it comes down to it, you don't know who gets the most benefit – the people served or the volunteers," Dave continues. "All I know is that I think I'd miss it if I had to stop."