

3/4/2024

Dear Willow Award Committee,

We would like to nominate Shannon Smith, a care coordinator for Integrity Incorporated, a care management company for adults and children that includes foster care, supportive living, elder care, personal respite care, and community-based services.

When Larry was an infant, our family had been designated as his legal caregivers due to the complex nature of the care he would need. And for 48 years, we dedicated our lives to caring for Larry at home for as long as possible. And thanks to a very special care coordinator's advocacy and friendship, this was made possible until Larry's passing in January of this year.

Shannon went above and beyond to obtain services and adaptive equipment for Larry's needs. She was a huge advocate for him anytime our family needed diapers, accessories, or feeding supplies. We had utilized the services of Integrity for approx. 9 years before Shannon became Little Larry's coordinator in 2008. And although we received excellent care from all involved in those years, Shannon's special relationship with Larry was a true blessing for our family to see.

Part of the assistance that she gave to our family was helping us obtain a lift to help us get Larry out of the bed, a new wheelchair, and an accessible van. When it came time for our family to look for an accessible van that would accommodate Larry's manual wheelchair, Shannon saw to it that all paperwork was completed, filed, and made sure that our family was financially compensated to the fullest amount possible.

She touched base with us every single week to make sure that we had all of the supplies that Larry needed and went as far as making calls to the suppliers and facilitated conversations with the doctors to obtain prescriptions for the adaptive equipment and supplies. This was absolutely above and beyond. This was on top of her everyday duties as a care manager.

When Larry got sick on a Friday, we took him to the emergency room. On Saturday, we called Shannon to let her know what was going on. He had a stint placed in his kidney on Sunday. And by Monday, Shannon came to be with us. She continued to check on us all thorough out the week. By Sunday when we knew that the end was close, she came and was with us to the end. She was with us during the service and the graveside, as well as several employees from Integrity. And Shannon has checked on us every week ever since.

In conclusion, we would like to say how much we have come to love and appreciate all that Shannon has done for Larry and us. It is important to note that Shannon is not and never was an end-of-life caregiver. She did not sign up for that. But she fulfilled that role to the fullest and we cannot imagine this journey without her. Many people can say they care. But we knew without a doubt Shannon loved Larry. And this is why we would like to nominate her for the Central Arkansas Willow Award.

Sincerely,

Cates Family
Larry "Little Larry" Cates
1976 - 2024