



Me and my big brother, Steve

My brother, Steve, has been living at Hammer & NER since 1986. It's hard to believe it's been nearly 40 years.

**I would like to ask you to donate in support of Steve and everyone at Hammer & NER. But first, let me tell you a little bit about my brother.**

Steve is my big brother and my only sibling. When he was six months old, he sustained a serious brain injury during an operation, and it forever changed his life. Growing up, we were very close. I loved hanging out with him. In the summer, we were at the swimming pool almost every day. As we moved into our high school years, it was clear Steve would need a place where someone could take care of him as he became taller and bigger than my parents, which presented some challenges.

My mother, Margaret Argall, had begun volunteering at Hammer Residences a little before she and my dad, Jim, decided they would need to find a place to care for Steve. They explored what would be important to him. When they decided that Hammer would be the right place, they agreed that the natural time to make the transition was when I left for college to attend the U of M. The transition went well, and Hammer became Steve's home. In fact, on Sundays, if there was a choice between going to church with us or going on a Hammer outing with his housemates, Steve would choose Hammer. He really likes his home.



Graduation day 1986 – a proud day for Steve!

Every day I see the dedication and commitment the caregivers at Hammer & NER provide to my brother Steve and his housemates. I can't imagine what their life would be like, if not for caregivers. **Please make your gift today as your way to acknowledge the peace of mind this care provides.**

When my mother retired, she was extraordinarily involved with Hammer, including serving on the Board of Directors and on numerous committees. She believed in using your head, heart, and hands to help others and taught me it's not only about giving financially but giving of your talents, too.

After my father passed away in 2001, Mom and I talked about me eventually becoming Steve's guardian. In her heart, she wasn't ready to pass the baton, but she had all the documents in place to make the transition easier when the time came. I became Steve's guardian in 2014 when Mom started having health issues. Before she passed away in 2016, I assured her I would take care of my big brother. I've been his guardian for 10 years now. Being a sibling guardian is a special gift handed down from my parents.

Steve has aged quite a bit in the last five years. It started with a fall about four years ago (he is a fall risk and uses a walker). He was challenged at his long-time home at Ridgeview because of the home's stairs. We worked with the Hammer & NER team to move Steve to Lawndale, which gives him single-level living. It has really improved his quality of life. Lawndale's Program Manager, Michael Bryant, was great to work with and made Steve's transition to his new home a smooth one. Steve is quite happy there.

**Like Steve, the people Hammer & NER serves are aging, and their care must evolve to meet their needs. Staff are an integral part of the solution that Hammer & NER provides. They are very caring and adaptive and receive ongoing training and resources to accommodate changing needs.**



**Steve (right) enjoys hanging out with his Lawndale housemates.**

My parents were passionate about the longevity of Hammer & NER and making sure gifts are used in a financially prudent manner. In fact, my mother was a legacy donor, and I am continuing her commitment through planned giving to keep Hammer & NER sustainable. We need to help ensure homes are updated to meet the changing needs of the people supported. We need to invest in well-trained and dedicated caregivers to be there 24/7 and in nurses who are familiar with the complex medical needs of aging adults with disabilities.

**If I could paint a picture of the future, we would continue to grow and expand and keep Hammer & NER a viable option for those with special needs.** However, the cost of providing services continues to climb, government funding is inadequate and uncertain, and there is a growing funding gap.

**Hammer & NER relies on your generosity to care for Steve and the 360 people they serve.**

Hammer & NER is Steve's family, and we are committed to investing in this remarkable organization. For us, it's about showing thanks for 40 years of care. If every family, who can, makes regular gifts, it will make a significant difference. **Please join me in giving back to Hammer & NER.**



**I promised my mother that I would take care of my brother.**

Thank you,

*Susan Haas*

Susan Haas, Steve's little sister

