

self sufficiency



Our mission is to empower people with physical disabilities to reach for their full potential in every aspect of life.

STANLEY STERNAL

By the time Stan Sternal arrived at Courage Center, he had made up his mind to reclaim his life. That was in October 2006, after months of uncertainty about his future.

“The trouble began in June 2006,” Sternal recalls. “My wife and I flew to Hawaii for our daughter’s wedding. While there, I became terribly sick, and, on the plane trip back to Minnesota, my right leg hurt and began to swell. I saw my doctor immediately, but nothing was identified as the cause.”

The swelling continued off and on; then, two and a half months later, Sternal began to have difficulty breathing, too. He was told an EKG indicated the possibility of an imminent heart attack and was admitted to the hospital.

“But nothing was found over the next five days,” Sternal says, shaking his head in disbelief. “Angiogram and lung capacity tests were negative, and I was about to be discharged by a pulmonary specialist even though I was still having trouble breathing. My wife protested: She had heard a nurse say there was no record of a CT scan of my lungs. Good thing she did: the CT scan showed my lungs were 80 percent full of blood. I was literally drowning in blood clots!”

Sternal’s only hope was a two-hour intravenous tPA infusion to dissolve the clots in his lungs. “I was told that without the tPA, I would die,” says Sternal, “and, with the procedure, I would have a 10 percent chance of getting a stroke from bleeding in my brain. I chose the procedure. No question. Unfortunately, I became one of the 10 percent who have a stroke.”

As a result of intracranial bleeding, Sternal experienced severe aphasia as his memory and communications skills took the brunt of the hit. At Sister Kenny Institute, he began intense physical, occupational and speech therapy. “Of course, I was mad at the world,” he recalls. “Imagine looking at a pen and not being able to remember its name. The frustration was infuriating!”

That’s when Sternal’s wife contacted Courage Center and chose the Transitional Rehabilitation Program (formerly known as Courage Residence) as appropriate for her husband’s rehabilitation plan.

“Courage Center has a wonderful reputation, so we were optimistic,” Sternal says. “But we weren’t prepared for what happened. After a week there, my memory started to return with extraordinary rapidity and clarity. I could *feel* the difference from one day to the next. The strangest memories



BIO – Stanley Sternal

Diagnosis: Stroke

Age When Started Services: 61

Years at Courage Center: 2006 - present

Services received at Courage Center: Transitional Rehabilitation Program, Courage Center at Home

Made gains towards independence: Improved memory and communication

came back: phone numbers, my social security number, even my gun registration number from my service days. Everything in my brain began to wake up again. My therapists – who were all great, by the way – recognized my progress and encouraged continued care through their Home & Community program.”

Courage Center at Home, formerly called Home & Community, helped Sternal work on his communication skills at home. “We used different techniques to improve my skills,” he explains. “For example, I’d watch a TV program or read a book, then write about it and give a verbal account of it to my therapists as they visited me during the week.”

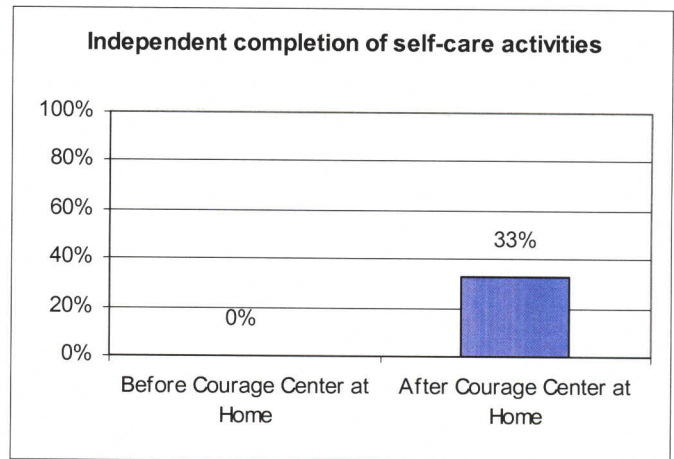
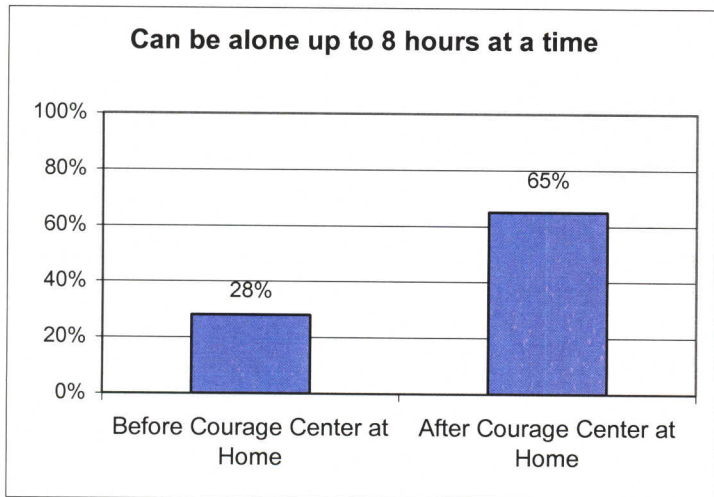
As for results, Sternal is pleased with his progress. “I still get a little tongue-tied when I talk too quickly, but I’m learning how to slow down and let the words fall into their proper order. I was even able to give a speech recently to about 250 of my business peers. Of course I was nervous and my presentation wasn’t perfect, but it wasn’t bad,” he smiles.

At 63, Sternal has returned to his job as an account manager for a facilities management company. “Driving a car, returning to work – these were goals I *knew* I could achieve. I guess I’m just a stubborn guy with a lot of perseverance,” he laughs, “and a new outlook on life. Every day is a pleasure to be alive, and every *thing* is a pleasure to *do*.”

COURAGE CENTER AT HOME

A Better Life for Minnesotans with Disabilities

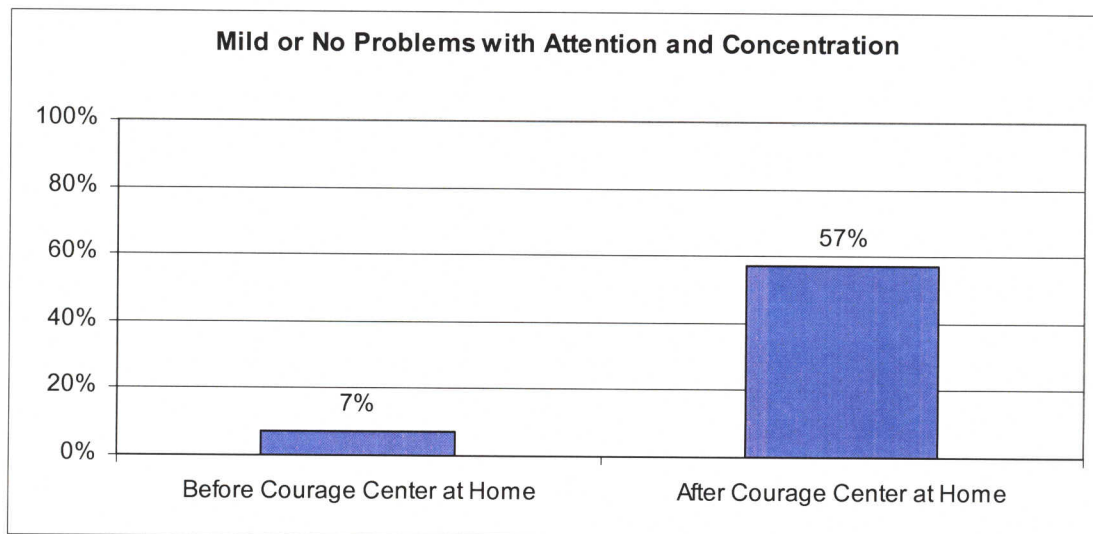
A Better Deal for Minnesota Taxpayers



65% of clients in the Courage Center at Home program have a decrease in the level of supervision that they need during their stay in the program.

84% of clients participating in Courage Center at Home improve in independent living skills during their stay in the program.

When clients are discharged from Courage Center at Home, they maintain their gains.



COURAGE CENTER is a nonprofit rehabilitation and resource center that advances the lives of children and adults experiencing barriers to health and independence. At Courage Center, we specialize in treating brain injury, spinal cord injury, stroke, chronic pain, autism, and disabilities experienced since birth. Founded in 1928, Minneapolis-based Courage Center offers advanced technologies and innovation provided in part through the efforts of thousands of volunteers and donors.

For more information about Courage Center, visit CourageCenter.org.