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The saying goes: Choose a job you love and you will never have to work another day in your life! After 35 years in the landscape business Paul DeJong is a primary example of this way of life and he's not about to let Parkinson's get in the way of his true passion for growing plants and helping customers find beauty in all different types of greenery.

Paul started working at Landscape Garden Centers in Sioux Falls, SD when he was just 22 years old. He eventually went from employee to co-owner and is now looking forward to his retirement years in the near future. He has found that he not only loves plants and creating breathtaking outdoor living spaces, but he also loves the people he meets year after year. He says it's those relationships that he has grown to love the most and what keeps him motivated and so dedicated to his career.

Through the years Paul experienced chronic pain and in more recent years he started having balance issues along with more pronounced tremors and changes in his sleep patterns. It wasn't until June of 2017 that Paul received a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. His first reaction was to keep his diagnosis private because he had this sense of shame in thinking it was his fault and something he did. He struggled working through the initial shock and once he was able to do that he found it extremely liberating to share his story and let people in on his personal Parkinson's journey.

When asked what he felt was the biggest misconception of Parkinson's Paul had this to say, "Parkinson's disease is not a death sentence! So many people tend to think your life is over and you won't be able to do anything, but that is so far from the truth. You can have quality of life if you just learn to take it day by day."

Paul also stressed the importance of having a support system and said his family remains his #1 and has been there every step of the way. He has a lot of self-pride as both a husband and father and is learning to ask for help when needed, but it continues to be an everyday challenge. He also finds support through the Avera Therapy team and commented on working with Stephanie Myers and how impressed he was with how much she truly cares about the individuals she works with..."All the staff there are beyond supportive. They take great pride in their work and show such dedication to each and every individual they meet."

Paul resides in Sioux Falls with his wife, Lisa and together they have three beautiful children: Tyler (26), Alex (21), and Madison (15).