

# What Difference Does a Ramp Make?

*You would have to ask those for whom SAWs has built one.  
 So we did.*

*by Charlie Russell*

Increasingly, donors and foundations are asking us what impact our work actually has on the lives of those we serve. “What difference are you making?” is an important question when there are so many worthy causes in need of the limited available resources. In response in early 2017, SAWs Intake Volunteers began conducting a pre-ramp and post-ramp quality of life survey of clients for whom [SAWs](#) constructed a ramp.\* The results were not surprising.

When asked, “On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being ‘very hard,’ how hard has it been to get out of your home?” respondents showed a 57% decrease in difficulty. Obstacles to mobility can lead to withdrawal from aspects of daily life, not permitting many to remain a part of their community.\* This can be key to their social wellbeing and contributes to mental health issues. [In a study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health \(NIH\),](#)<sup>1</sup> it was stated, “Among persons with major mobility difficulties, 30.6% reported being frequently depressed



or anxious, compared to 3.8% for persons without mobility difficulties.”

The study went on to conclude, “For most people, walking barely requires conscious thought. For others, difficulty walking compromises not only physical safety but also emotional well-being. Moving physically around the home and community is central to daily life—going to work or school, doing errands, visiting family and friends. Without assistance or mobility aids, difficulty walking can lead to increasing isolation, anxiety, and depression. Often people seek care from primary care physicians for their underlying medical conditions, but physicians frequently fail to fully recognize patients’ functional problems.”<sup>23</sup>

This is probably the most significant cause for the explosion of joy seen at the end of a new ramp.

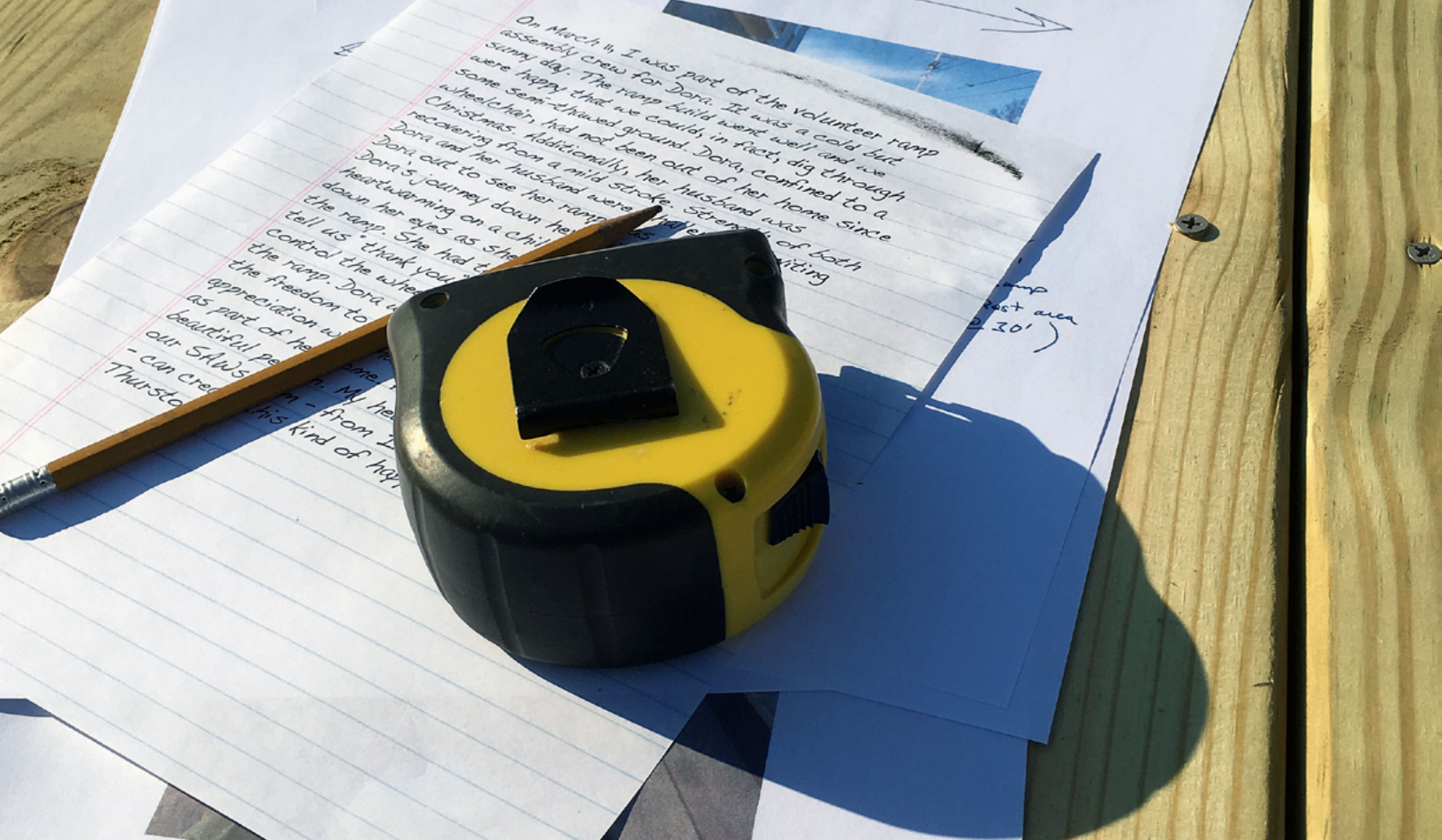
But there is another more important result of newfound mobility, the reduction of fear. The question, “Do you

<sup>1</sup>Mobility Difficulties Are Not Only a Problem of Old Age. 2001 Apr; 16(4): 235–243. Lisa I Iezzoni, MD, MSc, 1,3 Ellen P McCarthy, PhD, 1,3 Roger B Davis, ScD, 1,3 and Hilary Siebens, MD2

<sup>2</sup> Guralnik JM, Fried LP, Simonsick EM, editors. Bethesda, Md: National Institute on Aging; 1995. The Women’s Health and Aging Survey: Health and Social Characteristics of Older Women with Disability. NIH publication 95-4009. eds.

<sup>3</sup> Hoenig H. Educating primary care physicians in geriatric rehabilitation. Clin Ger Med. 1993;9:883–93.

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# Stories from the Field

Part of the richness of SAWs can be found in the profound impact its work has on the lives of so many. We focus primarily on the lives of persons with disabilities for whom a ramp is an open door to normalcy, and rightly so. That a simple ramp can have such an impact, not only on the life of a single person but also an entire family and their community, is a thing of awe. But the impact that ramp has on volunteers is the second part and is not lost on them.

Here is what we have heard from a few of the over 800 SAWs volunteers across Indiana when asked to share one of their favorite moments.

“Mine would probably be the Chaparro build. We did a home visit with them with Rik two years ago

but weren’t sure how to buy materials to build their ramp. The people from the church I brought with me did stay in contact with them, visiting them regularly. They’ve become

*“Dora’s journey down her finished ramp was heartwarming on a chilly day. Tears streamed down her face as she took her first ride down the ramp.”*

like family to that church. (All are Spanish-speaking). The Chaparros ended up moving twice in the meantime. But then we met SAWs. And SAWs had a plan and materials and the know-how to do this ministry.

And they built Wilfredo a ramp. I jokingly told him, “We’re slow, but two years and two houses later, we got you a ramp!” - Amy Houghtaling

On March 11, I was part of the volunteer ramp assembly crew for Dora. It was a cold but sunny day. The ramp build went well and we were happy that we could, in fact, dig through some semi-thawed ground. Dora, confined to a wheelchair, had not been out of her home since Christmas. Additionally, her husband was recovering from a mild stroke. Strength of both Dora and her husband were challenged. Inviting Dora out to see her ramp was enlightening. Dora’s journey down her finished ramp was heartwarming on a chilly day. Tears streamed down her face as she took her first ride down the



ramp. She had to shake everyone's hand and tell us "Thank you." Her husband was able to control the wheelchair and get Dora back up the ramp. Dora was grateful and humble to have the freedom to get out. She was shining with appreciation with having such a beautiful ramp as part of her home. A beautiful ramp for a beautiful person. My heart was filled knowing our SAWs team – from Interviewer to Finisher – can create this kind of happiness. - *J Timothy Thurston*

SAWs built a ramp for a young man afflicted with cerebral palsy who has great difficulty accessing his home, especially in his wheelchair. The SAWs team corrected this situation with a ramp that allows him easy access to his home. As we watched him use his ramp we noted that his brother had no problem enjoying the ramp with his bicycle. This was a very rewarding ramp for the team as we saw the whole family gather to watch this young man use his ramp for the first time. Great work for the team again!! – *John Anderson*

SAWs of St. Joe County completed its 14th project of the season for Kay and her husband on a picture perfect day. What an outstanding team we had comprised of three engineering and one law student from Notre Dame (who by the way are becoming great regulars), plus two from River Valley Church, one from First United Methodist Church of Mishawaka, one from Riverside Church, and two from Granger Community Church. This ramp will greatly aid Kay who has some complicated mobility issues, but now has a safe way out of her home that will provide the freedom she has not been able to enjoy for months. – *Frank Aquila*

My family and I have been involved with SAWs for many years. Over the years we have had the chance to build many ramps both

large and small. We have participated in the pre-fabrication and my oldest son, Ben, an aspiring engineer, has helped survey and design a ramp. There are so many wonderful things I could say about SAWs and the amazing and much needed service they offer but I wanted to highlight one thing today. Our first introduction to SAWs was actually participating in the pre-fab portion of the process for several weeks. Then I decided it was time we built a ramp so Ben, who was probably about 13 years old at the time, and I signed up for a Saturday build. I really did not know what to expect. We are the type of volunteer that wants to show up, work hard and stay busy;

*"I believe it is important to get young people involved in volunteering early and often so it is part of their life as they grow and go out into the world on their own."*

we are not good at standing around. Well we stayed busy and learned a lot about building a ramp. I believe it is important to get young people involved in volunteering early and often so it is part of their life as they grow and go out into the world on their own. Our project manager was Pete Mohr and I believe he is a large part of the reason we have continued to volunteer with SAWs. Pete could have easily given us a few easy tasks and not worry about keeping us busy and involved but he didn't. In fact he took Ben under his wing and made sure he showed Ben everything about the build and made sure that Ben was hands-on in building the ramp. As they say sometimes it is just easier to do it yourself rather than try to teach someone. Pete and the other SAWs

volunteers could have done that but instead they got us involved and we were hooked on the program. It truly is an amazing feeling to spend a few hours working hard and at the end look at the ramp completed and know that you have helped a family. – *Debbie Mann*

SAWs recently conducted a survey\* of its volunteers to learn more about their experiences in order to reinforce and enhance them. Given that part of SAWs' mission is to provide "a life changing experience for the volunteers," this survey was deemed needed to confirm we are indeed fulfilling that mission. Of the 109 that responded, 83% found working with a team of cheerful givers an enjoyable and fun experience even if at times Mother Nature keeps it interesting.

The survey also revealed that volunteers were less likely to offer financial support. This is a serious cause for concern as the calls for help continue to mount, both across Indiana and beyond, and our faith calls us to respond. The lessons from the survey are already being implemented and it will be conducted annually.

As the result of a large grant from The Indianapolis Foundation, SAWs has contracted professional services to develop a plan to remedy these concerns. SAWs will continue to stay true to its mission of awesome, life-changing volunteer experiences while also providing more opportunities for passionate donors to go deeper in their commitment to the mission of [SAWs](#).

The stories told here are just a sampling of the impact our work has had on our volunteers, who find themselves blessed almost as much as our clients with the gift of a ramp. Help make these gifts possible and share in the joy.

\* Conducted June 2017 by SH Research Inc., 3450 Foster Ridge Lane, Carmel, IN 46033-4640, [www.shresearch.com](http://www.shresearch.com)

# SAWs Builds on Its Leadership Legacy

by

Carol Smith, SAWs Inc. Board Vice Chairman  
& Bryan Orander, President, Charitable Advisors



Since 2003, our founder, Rik Hagarty, has built and sustained a critically needed organization and his knowledge and experience are irreplaceable. His passion and entrepreneurial drive have created extraordinary social benefits for low-income, disabled citizens throughout the State of Indiana. Rik has led the organization to the current point and is primarily responsible for the past growth and vitality of the organization.

Looking to the future, the board of [SAWs](#) has created a Search Committee to recruit an Executive Director to complement the work of our founder, and our amazing crew of volunteer leaders. With SAWs continued growth and more opportunities for expansion, the board has decided this is the time to add to the leadership and fundraising capacity of SAWs. Hagarty will continue to coordinate operations beyond Indianapolis and lead expansion efforts to new communities.

Our goal is an executive transition that will leave our organization healthy, vital and strong with increased organizational capacity. Such a transition will provide a unique opportunity for our organization to strengthen capacity, infrastructure, understand our strategic priorities, and establish future directions.

The SAWs Search Committee is working with Charitable Advisors for the search and expects to begin recruiting in April with the new leader beginning in early summer. The position will be posted at [www.CharitableAdvisors.com](http://www.CharitableAdvisors.com), the Nonprofit Job Board on March 31, 2018. Interested parties may also contact Kathleen Poland at [Kathleen@CharitableAdvisors.com](mailto:Kathleen@CharitableAdvisors.com).



*Above Left: Rik being interviewed by local television station about SAWs at the Indy Metro Group facility.*

*Left: Rik Hagarty (in white hat) with team on site at the first ramp by SAWs in 2003.*



# News & Notes



## **Carpenter's Hands Renamed [SAWs Ramps of St. Joseph County Indiana](#)**

Carpenter's Hands of Granger Community Church, which initially created the group, felt a name change was necessary as SAWs is

no longer solely a mission of GCC. "I find the change to be of value due to the fact that this ministry here in St Joe County now includes some 11 other churches and growing," said Frank Aquila, St. Joseph County Area Coordinator.

### **Debbie Mann Joins SAWs Board**

Debbie Mann, Director of Leasing and Sales for Mann Properties, brings more than 15 years of sales experience and a finance background to the SAWs Board of Directors. Since joining Mann

Properties in 2002, Debbie has managed leasing negotiations and land sales for the company's retail and industrial developments throughout Central Indiana.

Debbie has built several ramps, participated in pre-fab and currently enter all requests for new ramps in the SAWs database. "Since being involved with SAWs I have come to realize the incredible need for ramps. I have been very impressed with how effectively and efficiently SAWs has been able to develop this mission and offer this greatly need-

ed service to so many people."

Before working in sales, Debbie was an auditor in the futures industry. Debbie holds a bachelor's degree in finance from Indiana University.

### **2018 Build Season Is In Full Swing**

Not waiting for the warmer temps of spring, SAWs teams are at work across the state. With a waiting list of over 300 there's no time to waste and all of these ramps are not yet funded. Make your contribution to change lives at [www.SAWsRamps.org](http://www.SAWsRamps.org).

*(Continued from page 1)*

fear that you will not be able to get out of your home in an emergency?" revealed a 93% reduction in that concern in the case of fire or natural disaster. [National Fire Protection Association](#) estimates that "Physical disability was identified as a contributing factor in an estimated average of 400, or 15%, of U.S. home fire deaths per year during 2007-2011. Providing adequate fire safety for individuals with physical disabilities can be challenging, particularly in cases of severe mobility limitations." A simple doorway threshold can be a major hurdle to safety. The possibility of being trapped in our homes is not an ever-present fear for those of us with the ability to escape. But that is not the reality for those who must depend on others to simply get out of the house.

Missing medical appointments is a major problem for a population that is in need of medical attention almost daily in general. "Have you missed important appointments, including doctor appointments, due to needing assistance?" is a question key to the mission of SAWs. Over 60% of those surveyed responded that they were able to make more of their scheduled

medical appointments. "Delayed medical care may adversely affect patients' quality of life and result in more depressive symptoms."<sup>4</sup> These delays can also lead to an increased need for emergency care and preventable hospitalizations and result in higher medical costs,"<sup>5</sup> according to [The Gerontological Society of America](#).

Our survey revealed an active life beyond the confines of home is essential to good mental health and wellbeing. We know this ourselves just being confined to our beds when too ill to be in public. Consequently, SAWs considers the question "Has your outlook on the future improved?" critical in assessing the impact of our work. "Active engagement with life, which includes social engagement, is recognized as an essential component of successful aging."<sup>6</sup> The survey showed a significant increase in social involvement, which showed a major improvement

in a positive outlook on life. A simple ramp becomes a link to the world beyond the front door and a means of remaining connected.

Does it make a difference? Absolutely!

The mission of SAWs is to improve the quality of life of those in need allowing them to age-in-place and provide our volunteers a transformational experience. The proof is in the numbers but mostly in the joy we see at the end of a ramp.

Your donation will help SAWs change the lives of people in need of a brighter tomorrow. Please go to [www.SAWsRamps.org](http://www.SAWsRamps.org) and make a difference.

\* Survey questions:

Are you able to get out of your home without assistance? How many hours a week?

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being "very hard", how hard has it been to get out of your home?

Do you fear that you will not be able to get out of your home in an emergency?

Have you missed important appointments, including doctor appointments, due to needing assistance?

How many social activities a week outside your home do you attend such as visiting friends and family, bingo, church, etc.?

Has your outlook on the future improved? (6-weeks post-ramp installation)

4 Owsley C. McGwin G. Jr Scilley K. Meek G. C. Seker D. Dyer A. (2007). Effect of refractive error correction on health-related quality of life and depression in older nursing home residents. *Archives of Ophthalmology*, 125, 1471 – 1477. doi:10.1001/archophth.125.11.1471

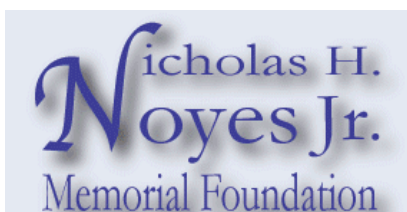
5 Hughes-Cromwich P. Wallace R. (2006). Cost benefit analysis of providing non-emergency medical transportation. *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, 1956, 86 – 93. doi:10.3141/1956-11

6 Successful aging. Rowe JW, Kahn RL *Gerontologist*. 1997 Aug; 37(4):433-40.

foundation \faun-'dā-shən\  
:basis upon which something stands or is supported

SAWs expresses it deep graditude to these organizations upon which so much of our work depends.

**ORTHOINDY**  
FOUNDATION



Second Presbyterian Mayer Chapel Fund  
Second Presbyterian Women  
Second Presbyterian Church Mission Committee





In the early days of the frontier in areas sparsely populated, a traveling pastor would serve several communities. They were called “Circuit Riders,” making their rounds across the countryside. I guess that’s what you could call Harry Lyness, a Certified Lay Speaker for the United Methodist Church. When called upon, he delivers a faithful message to congregations too small to employ a full time pastor. But Harry not only serves multiple rural churches he also serves multiple counties\* in rural southeastern Indiana.

Harry and his wife, Barbara, live in West Harrison, Indiana, a town of less than 300 people, in Dearborn County right on the Indiana-Ohio state line. In fact, Harrison, Ohio is on the other side of the street. His dad was a contractor and, after a stint in the Navy, he worked for his dad until Harry carried on for 40 years with his son and daughter. Together they continued the construction business doing projects in the neighboring counties. Harry and his family have traveled to 14 states as far as Alaska and 6 countries, including 30 trips to Haiti, to assist in disaster recovery. Harry says, “It’s a vacation with a purpose.” So it’s a small step connecting Harry’s ministry and his construction skills to the mission of SAWs. Harry’s not sure how he learned about SAWs but it fits perfectly.

In 2016, Harry built his first ramp for SAWs. It was a two-man effort and he learned a lot. He managed every step in the process, site survey, design, construction and installation. It helped that it was a simple, straight ramp. Since, Harry has built several more enlisting volunteers from the churches he serves. He’s looking to connect with more churches, regardless of denomination, to serve more people in need hidden in the hills of southern Indiana.

As word gets out of Harry’s work the demand is increasing. “It’s not rocket science,” Harry says, “Men and women can do this.” Harry has five ramps waiting funding and more sure to come. “People don’t care what you know as long as they know you care,” Harry said.

God bless you Harry Lyness!

\* Dearborn, Decatur, Franklin, Fayette, Jennings, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, and Union counties

# A Circuit Rider for SAWs

by Charlie Russell

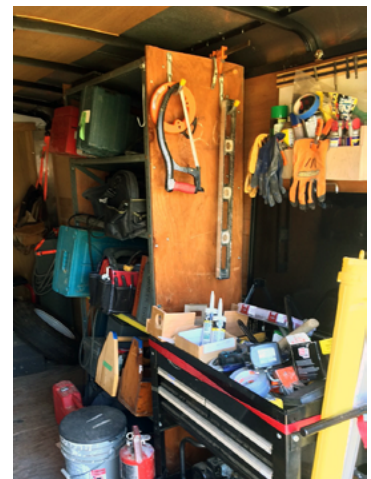


Above: Harry Lyness (center) receiving The Foundation for Evangelism 2015 Distinguished Evangelist of the Year award.

Right: Harry’s “workshop on wheels” makes the circuit with him.

Below Left: Harry recruits volunteers from the churches he serves.

Below: “Men and women can do this. It’s not rocket science,” says Harry.





**Every journey begins  
with a single step...**

**...unless it's this one.**

**SAWS**  
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