

Building Freedom One Ramp at a Time

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Coming Events

June 18 **SAWs** will present its ramp system to the Kentucky Assistive Technology Service (KATS) Network conference in Lexington KY.

August 17 Join **SAWs** for an exciting evening of baseball up close at Victory Field. Tickets are \$30 which includes a pre-game all-you-can-eat burgers, brats and dogs buffet from 12:00 to 1:30 in the Coors Corner and a seat along the right field line. Tickets will be limited.

Every Saturday Ramp Building from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Go online at www.sawsramps.org and register to help.



Carmel Indiana Woman Gets Ramp

For Linda Bennett leaving the house was an ordeal. Confined to a wheel chair, this Carmel, Indiana mother had to be carried to the curb by two people "like a couch," she said, just to make it to a doctor's appointment.

Problem solved. The men and women of **SAWs** (Servants at Work) built a 46-foot ramp system for her in about four hours earlier this month. Linda and her Chihuahua made it to the curb at the end of the build with a big smile and a big thank you. It is part of the ministry of **SAWs**.

The group has now erected close to 550 such ramps for qualified low-income families in the Indianapolis area and across the state. Started in a two-car garage at Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis more than ten years ago, the **SAWs** organization has expanded under the leadership of founder and President Rik Hagarty. Other churches have joined the ecumenical movement, including St. Luke's United Methodist Church, Northview Christian Church and others, to fund and provide volunteers to the project.

They still use the garage at Second Presbyterian each Thursday for pre-builds, fashioning engineered ramps, support assemblies and platforms to precise standards. Then, on Saturday a crew hauls the **SAWs** trailer to the site and erects the ramp. Yet another crew follows up a few days

SAWs (Servants At Work, Inc.) is a non-profit 501(c)(3), all volunteer ministry established in 2003 that builds wheelchair ramps to provide the elderly and persons with disabilities access to their world, allowing them to remain in their homes.

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later to rout and sand it to perfection.

Over the years the volunteers have perfected the process. Ramps meet the American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements of one-inch slope per foot. Uprights are set on pea gravel so the ramp can be easily removed when no longer needed.

The group included several retired engineers, an architect, electrician, a couple of physicians, a dentist and a host of other folks who enjoy cutting

treated lumber and making people's lives a little easier when faced with a handicap. On-site surveys, permission from landlords, a qualification interview and detailed cut and design software gives **SAWs** a total package of quality and safe construction.

An average ramp costs \$750 in materials. Foundations, churches, corporations and private donors fund the ramps at no cost to the client. Menard's has given discounts on treated lumber and special deck

screws. And all labor is volunteered. The organization now has 25 affiliates building ramps across Indiana and interest is growing beyond.

To learn more about **SAWs**, go to its website at SAWsRamps.org or look for it on Facebook at Facebook.com/SawsRamps.

*By Gary Blackburn
Westfield, Indiana Correspondent
The Times of Hamilton County*

SAWs 2014 Annual Kick-Off Meeting

SAWs (Servants At Work, Inc.) celebrated the beginning of its 11th year with a dinner for all its volunteers, clients and partner agencies on Saturday, April 12th. The dinner was hosted at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Indianapolis. Attendees from some of the 25 **SAWs** affiliates came from as far away as Evansville, Indiana, a 4 hour drive.

Orion Bell, President and CEO of Central Indiana Council on Aging (CICOA) was the keynote speaker and did a masterful job of thanking, encouraging, and inspiring the attendees. He underscored the growing need for people to remain in their homes and how important it is for their emotional health and welfare to not be trapped there by accessibility barriers.

Rik Hagarty, President and CEO of **SAWs**, echoed Orion's comments and emphasized the need for wheelchair ramps even outside the state of Indiana. Studies indicate that 6% of the American population has mobility issues and many of them are in need of a wheelchair ramp. Rik indicated that inquiries about **SAWs** have been received from many areas of the country, some as far away as Oregon. This confirms there is critical need everywhere. Rik indicated the board is in

the early stages of developing an answer to these calls.

Victor Lopez, father of Hector Lopez, a client of **SAWs**, stole the evening. Hector was severely injured in an auto accident along with one of his sisters and his mother. Mother and sister recovered from their injuries but Hector is confined to a wheelchair and continues to be totally dependent on others for his care. Victor gave a heart-rending thank you message to the **SAWs** volunteers that built the ramp for his son. Victor had practiced his English for weeks and his message of gratitude to **SAWs** and to God left no eye dry in the house.

The Kick Off Meeting was somewhat anticlimactic since ramp building had already begun. Thirty-five ramps are on the list as carry-overs from 2013. This year promises to be no less demanding than



Victor Lopez shared his family's story with the audience and how the ramp built by **SAWs** was an answer to prayer.

Hector enjoyed the evening as well and was a vivid reminder how important the work of **SAWs** is to so many.

the record-breaking year past.