

Building Freedom One Ramp at a Time

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News & Notes

The Elkhart County Community Foundation awarded SAWS a \$3500 matching grant for ramps needed in that county. Congratulations to Brandon Mitchell, the Area Coordinator, for successfully raising the matching funds!

Carpenter's Hands, the SAWS affiliate in St. Joseph County, has lent its skill to renovating a building in downtown South Bend for homeless veterans. They hope to return to building ramps late summer where 13 ramps are needed. Approximately \$10,000 is needed for these ramps. Any assistance in raising the funds will be greatly appreciated by those families.

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The SAWS Vigo County Construction Group has entered into a new relationship with the Business Development Department of Indiana State University for technical media support and ideas. The school will offer support in social media strategy and implementation to SAWS as part of a coming web site rebuild.

The SAWS affiliate in Delaware County just received a \$2,400 grant from the Delaware
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Statistics Are Numbers Without Tears

by Charlie Russell

I don't know the origin of this expression but it always moves me when I hear it. You've probably heard it before. It reminds me of how easy it is to disconnect from the human reality drowned beneath the waves of data that crash over us from every direction every day. But the volunteers of SAWS don't see numbers. They see tears of joy at the end of every ramp they build. But let's look at some numbers first.

According to the US Census of 2010, 3.3 million Americans 15-years old and older use a wheelchair. That was a little more than 1% of the total population of the United States 5 years ago, 1 in 100 people. About 10,000 of those are in Indiana. Another 10 million were using a walking aid, such as a cane, crutches or walker, many of whom are destined for a wheelchair.

Here's another number. The 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the US Census Bureau indicated 10.4 million Americans ages 5 to 65 and older had ambulatory disabilities of some type. A study done by Disability World found that "About half of wheelchair users must use steps to enter or exit their homes. ... A majority of the population using mobility devices is elderly, but there is a substantial minority who are of working-age. Members of this group are very unlikely to have jobs and, partly as a consequence, are substantially more likely than the remainder of the population to

SAWS (Servants At Work, Inc.) is a non-profit 501(c)(3), 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.

A commercial ramp is 3 times the cost of a SAWs ramp.

live in poverty. At all ages, income levels for mobility device users tend to be low, as do levels of educational attainment.”

One last number. The 2013 ACS Census data lists 14.3 million people between the ages of 5 to 75 with disabilities are below the poverty line. The average cost of a SAWs ramp is \$700, about 1/3 the cost of a commercial ramp. Yet for many of those in desperate need of a means to escape their homes, the cost of a

SAWs ramp is out of reach.

We know these numbers are increasing just due to population growth alone. But advances in medical care extending life span, the growing rate of diabetes and the resulting amputations, Baby Boomers aging and veterans returning with crippling injuries are bending the curve ever steeper.

To put a face on one of these numbers, here's Tabatha's story. Tabatha was standing at the rear of her

disabled car waiting for a family member to come help her. Without warning a driver rear-ended her car crushing both of her legs. The single mother of 3 young daughters, now a double amputee, faced a future with enormous hurdles. Her home sat on a rise with 2 levels of concrete steps to reach the sidewalk. In response, SAWs built a multi-tiered ramp that zigzagged to the sidewalk below. Though she still faced a difficult future

and a number of issues to resolve, the ability to leave her home unassisted made her path to solutions much easier.

All this data, these numbers, the human need, can make any effort seem like a drop in the ocean. And we at SAWs know we may not meet the need of every number. But it matters to those we do. If it matters to you, join us and let's make a difference one ramp at a time.

Adgie's Beautiful Ramp

by Joey Kubesch

Prior to that, Bill was a deep mine coal miner in Kentucky. I met Adgie when she came on duty as a caregiver for my Mother. Adgie was gentle, helpful to a fault, and always had a kind word for—and about—my Mom.

In the years since Mom's death in 2010, Adgie has had severe physical problems, and is tethered to a long hose attached to a giant oxygen tank for her COPD-compromised lungs. Her life pretty

much revolves around doctors' visits and an occasional trip for groceries. She's supported by her daughter and granddaughter on these journeys.

When I discovered that Adgie was not easily able to get in and out of

her own home, I turned to my long-time friend, Dave Ditzler and SAWs for help. I asked him whether SAWs ever goes out of town. David said something about, “for the right people” but I discovered that they build all over the State of Indiana.

It seemed like no time at all and Adgie's ramp was approved, designed, and ready to be built. A wonderful group of SAWs volunteers came on Saturday and put the ramp in before lunch. This Rolls Royce ramp is a standout in our little town of Peru, with the spacious deck outside Adgie's back door, and the special hand-hewn installation of pavers where the ramp ends and the sidewalk isn't wide enough.

Adgie explains: “I can get out on my own now. I can take my cane and walk up and down on the landing and



Adgie Hall used to be a hard working farm wife. Together with her late husband Bill, they farmed a small acreage in northern Indiana.

on the ramp on pretty days. The doctor told me “the more you can move around, the better you are going to do.” Her hobby is quilts, “I love to sew and I love to read my Bible and

I work on my quilts,” she says, “and now I can go outside whenever I want” as her days hurry past.

I like to think that The Almighty is “mighty pleased” with the way His

Daughter is living her life. For my part, I've learned a lot in patience with limitations from Adgie. She's a Saint living among us here in Peru, Indiana.

Founder's View

Twenty-two years of waiting are over



Close your eyes and try to envision the house where you were born. Now envision yourself going in and out (letting the door slam to your mother's annoyance!). Up and down the steps, over the door threshold, free as a bird. Now envision yourself sitting at that same front door...in a wheelchair. You're only a little kid. The sun is shining, the air is inviting but there you sit waiting for someone to come and lift you and your chair over your hurdles.

Twenty-two year old Jamie didn't have to close his eyes and imagine. He still lived in the house where he was born and he was still having to wait for someone to come and take him down the steps then bring his power wheelchair down too. In 22 years, Jamie had never been outside his house without help from others. When Jamie got a little older his parents installed a ramp of their own but Jamie still had to wait because the ramp was too steep for him to get up or down it alone.

This spring, Christine from IU Hospital called SAWs and asked if we could help Jamie. The request was passed along to the Vanderburgh County Construction Group and they sprang into action. With financial support from SWIRCA (Southwest Indiana Regional Council on Aging), Jamie's ramp was designed, laid out and constructed. Throughout the day of the build, Jamie

kept coming to check on his ramp's progress. Finally, Jamie was invited to try it out. He did not have to be coaxed. He quickly zipped down the ramp in his motorized wheelchair, turned around on the sidewalk and zipped back up. “Now, that's what I'm talking about!” exclaimed Jamie.

Twenty-two years of waiting were over. Jamie has his freedom at long last. Five guys, \$700 worth of materials, and 5 1/2 hours of effort provided this young man with freedom he has never known. If you don't think you can make a difference in this world, ask Jamie. A few dollars or a few hours of effort can transform another person's life...just like Jamie's.

Now close your eyes again and envision all those people sitting in their wheelchairs at the threshold of their doors...waiting...for us.

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County Community Foundation. We are grateful to the foundation for its support of our mission.

Mark Harmon is leading young people from

the Logansport Juvenile Corrections Facility in building ramps in a 5 county area. Mark's team just completed their second ramp in the Kokomo area.

The SAWs Vanderburgh County Construction Group has secured funding from SWIRCA

(Southwest Indiana Regional Council on Aging) and Community One to keep their efforts in that moving forward.



Not All Prisons Have Bars...

...Some Just Have Steps

And people in need are waiting for you. The Community Census found that approximately 6% of the population of Indiana have personal accessibility needs. That's 392,200 people, many of whom are wheelchair bound and trapped by the steps at the door. **SAWs** has built hundreds of ramps across Indiana but we haven't even scratched the surface. Help us free those trapped in the prisons of their own homes. The work is easy and so rewarding.

Go to our website
www.SawsRamps.org
to volunteer.

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Building
Freedom
One Ramp
at a Time

SAWs 
Servants at Work, Inc.
Building Community • Transforming Lives • Accessing the World

"... You will free the captives from prison, releasing
those who sit in dark dungeons."
Isaiah 42:6