



Connections

The Newsletter of Bridge Disability Ministries



Winter, 2013

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A Season of Change and A Season of Steadfastness

by Dan Coppin, President, Board of Directors

*"There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity
under the heavens."*

- Eccl 3:1

Bridge Ministries is undergoing a season of change. Earlier this year, your Board of Directors and Jack Staudt – our longtime Executive Director - came to an agreement that this was an appropriate time for Jack to step down. Bridge is faced with a number of key personnel decisions in the coming months and this will enable the Board to structure a leadership team best suited for Bridge's future needs. We are extremely grateful for Jack's cooperation in this transition and for his many contributions to strengthening our ministries.

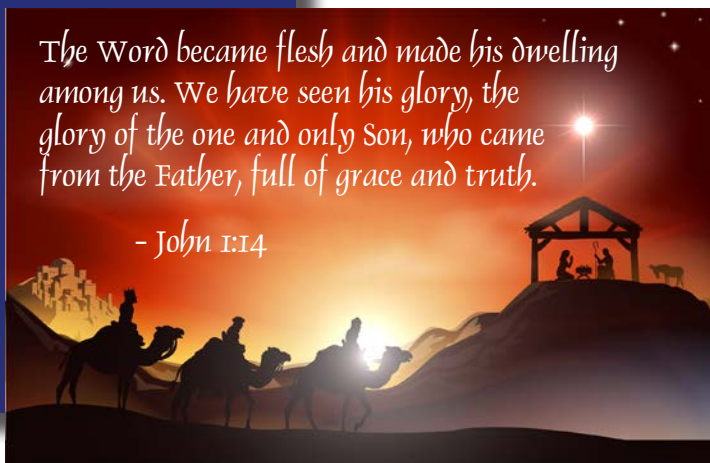
The Board has embarked on a search process to find a new Executive Director for Bridge. We are confident that God will lift up a new leader for Bridge in the coming weeks and we ask for your prayers in this process.

Since August I've had the great honor to work daily at Bridge as a volunteer during this transition to new leadership. Despite serving on the Board of Directors for nearly seven years, there was much I didn't know about Bridge or didn't see clearly enough. Here are just three observations I've made in these weeks.

- Bridge's ministries – Spiritual Care, Mobility and Guardianship – are more needed than ever. Every day we come in contact with people who seek to experience God's love through relationship with individuals and church communities. And every day we meet people in practical need of durable medical equipment and compassionate and loving guardianship services. Bridge's mission to alleviate isolation is as real and compelling today as it was nearly 27 years ago when Bridge was founded.
- Bridge is blessed with a dedicated, skilled and deeply spiritual staff who are led by Christ's example of compassion and inclusion. This staff understands and is committed to our vision and mission. And they go well beyond the call of duty in fulfilling this mission.
- Bridge is also blessed with a vast number of dedicated and generous volunteers who make our ministries possible. We couldn't accomplish what we do without the many churches who participate in our spiritual care programs, the volunteers who work in our administrative offices and the Meyer Mobility Center, the pro-bono attorneys who assist in guardianship, and, of course, the hundreds of people and organizations who support Bridge financially.

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling
among us. We have seen his glory, the
glory of the one and only Son, who came
from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

- John 1:14



Yes, we are in a season of change, but we are also in a season of steadfast commitment to Bridge's enduring mission:

"Because Bridge Ministries honors the God-given dignity and giftedness of persons with disabilities, we build relationships to alleviate isolation and enrich our churches and communities."

Change and steadfastness can go hand in hand. May God bless all those we serve during this season of thanksgiving and celebration of Christ's birth!

Caring for the Caregivers

by Linda Martin, Spiritual Care Programs & Volunteer Administrator



I am always amazed at the level of compassion I encounter amongst those living with severe challenges due to disability. Our Roots n' Wings Support group for people living with physical disabilities chose to explore Advocacy for Caregivers in our monthly meetings this year. They simply saw that caregivers often have a hard time and wanted to do something about it. Since November was National Family Caregivers Month, two members of the group who have family caregivers shared their experience in different ways. First, **Andrew Haris**, who lives with traumatic brain injury (TBI), shared the story of his parents and their role in his life as family caregivers since his injury as a child. Next, **Nate Alden** who lives with cerebral palsy (CP) writes about his grandmother, who is also his family caregiver and the person he relies on most. Please share these offerings with others in order to help Andrew and Nate raise awareness of the needs and experience of family caregivers.

Andrew Haris was injured in a serious car accident when he was nearly 4 years of age. Although he was only five blocks from home at the time, his injuries were extensive including Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). He was unconscious in the hospital for a month, and doctors suggested institutionalization to his parents. Andrew went through a long period of rehabilitation and has had seizures and mobility issues throughout and up to the present. He also required speech therapy for many years to restore his speech to a point where he could communicate with people well enough to be understood. Throughout this period of time, his care fell largely to his parents. Other than paid doctors and therapists, he didn't have paid caregivers.



Fortunately, Andrew eventually recovered much of his mobility. By the 4th grade he was able to ride the metro bus home from school, and he is now able to live independently. He travels to places like Alaska, Australia and the Grand Canyon. He no longer needs mobility equipment like wheelchairs to get around, but still lives with a seizure condition as a result of the accident and uses orthotic devices to increase stability when walking.

Andrew works at QFC as a courtesy clerk, riding to his job in Kirkland from his apartment in Seattle on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Then on Fridays he works at a bookstore. He also volunteers in the Meyer Mobility Center on Wednesdays. Despite his present level of independence, Andrew at times has continued to need caregiving from his parents in the form of helping with communication with medical personnel. Recently he had a badly swollen leg that needed to be checked out, so his parents went with him to help communicate with the doctor about treatment.

Andrew can usually rely on one of his parents to help out with an emergency, especially his mom who is almost always in the area. Andrew's father often takes him on Sunday drives to places he would have difficulty getting to on metro. He says that there are times, due to his complex medical needs, when he would require the assistance of a paid caregiver or case manager if he did not have a family caregiver available to help.

Andrew says his experience has taught him that the most important things a caregiver offers are being patient, supportive, and listening carefully. He also feels that he couldn't put a price on that kind of caregiving. What he wants people to know is that family caregiving is important work, and that you shouldn't institutionalize people if you care about them.

"Hula Dancer" by Nate Alden



She glides across the dance floor with the grace of a figure skater, waving her hands as the fronds of a palm, hips swaying gently to the rhythm of ocean waves. A story she creates in motion, to the wonder of all she meets. She is the very definition of the aloha spirit—warm, friendly, funny, and always willing to lend a hand to those in need. It is this very spirit and her love of her 'ohana (that's "family") which drives her very existence as a person, and it has, unbeknownst to her, thrust her into the worst crisis in a generation.

As a family caregiver, this Army brat turned proud Marylander and staunch supporter of all things Washington sport volunteered for the role 14 years ago, at a time when she herself should be the one cared for, but instead she has chosen to care for someone else. She does so without effective pay and with little time or space to care for herself. Only her passion for the islands and love of dance has kept her centered in the face of managing two impossible brothers, one of whom has a lifelong disability. Making matters worse is that she's done this all before—twice!

Mobility Moment, *by Gerry Barney, Mobility Manager*

One day in September a mother came into the Meyer Mobility Center with her 7 year old son who was moving up to the next grade level in elementary school. He was using a loaner wheelchair from Children's Hospital and they were looking for a way to improve his image and experience as he went back to school. We were fortunate to have a nice orange Quickie sport chair in our inventory at the time, and he appeared made for it after just a few adjustments.

There was, however, one remaining hurdle. The chair handled differently than a standard wheelchair and even though it had greater capability, it felt risky to him. Using the anti-tip devices and the different techniques to power it made him unsure of himself.

And then came a God moment. A young man volunteers in our shop infrequently whose brother lives with a disability that requires use of a wheelchair. He was there that day and he immediately saw what was needed. We were fortunate to also have an adult size sport chair at the time, and he hopped into it and invited the boy to come out in the parking lot so he could show him how to use the chair. He bonded with the boy readily and showed him how to center his weight differently and power the wheels more effectively. Soon you could see the confidence growing in the boy's face - and the gratitude in his mother's. They left us that day with a little moisture around the eyes, thankful that we are blessed to do this work which makes such a difference in the lives of those we serve.



Double Your Gift to Bridge Through Matching Gifts

Many companies will match the donations made by their employees/retirees to Bridge Ministries dollar for dollar. By completing your employer's gift matching form (some companies have their form online), you can double your contribution! If you are not sure your employer has a matching gift program, simply check with your Human Resources Department. Here are some of the companies with matching gifts programs:

Adobe Systems
Alaska Airlines
Allstate
Amgen
Bank of America
The Boeing Company

Costco Wholesale
GE
Google
JP Morgan Chase
Macy's
Microsoft
Regence Blueshield

Safeco
Starbucks
Symetra
UPS
United Way
University of Washington



Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Bridge's programs, which would not exist without their efforts. Currently our greatest needs are repair help and office help in the Mobility Center. If you are interested in these or other volunteer opportunities, and would like to learn more, please email Linda at lindam@bridgemin.org or call her at (425) 885-1006, ext. 118.

Thank you!



Teaching Tolerance

by Patty Croteau, Guardianship Agency Supervisor

We Guardians often experience 'teaching opportunities' while spending time with our clients. I have a guardianship client whose disability is intellectual - he is one of us TABies (Temporarily Able Bodied). One day I took him to a Bridge Ministries dance. He saw the Access vans dropping off people in wheelchairs, and exclaimed, "Hey, why did you bring me here? I don't like people in wheelchairs!" I reminded him that Bridge has Disability in its name, and told him that people who use wheelchairs are just as fun and worthy of respect as he is. Afterwards, he went in and had a marvelous time. Months later I had to take the same client to a new doctor, who happens to use a wheelchair, and braced myself for a negative reaction. I was pleasantly surprised when after the appointment he said, "I like her. Let's see her next time I have to go to the doctor." Just like my client, there are many people in the world who need a little guidance, and maybe a little push in the right direction, to see that people with disabilities (or other types of disabilities) are people just like us!



Bridge Disability Ministries

12356 Northup Way, Ste. 103
Bellevue, WA 98005-1956

Honoring People Living with Disabilities



What We Do:

- Spiritual Care
- Guardianship
- Mobility Equipment
- Community Connections
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Friendship Circles

Phone (425) 885-1006, Mobility Ministry: (425) 885-1008 (hours Tues-Thurs, Noon - 5pm)

www.bridgemin.org

bridge@bridgemin.org

Mark Your Calendars...

Sunday Evening Celebrations (4-6pm)

- January 12th Crossroads Bible Church
15815 SE 37th St., Bellevue, 98006
- February 9th St. Andrew Presbyterian Church
3604 NE 10th Ct., Renton, 98056
Please Note: 10:30am - 12:30pm
- March 8th Rock 'n' Roll Dance
Hosted by Newport Covenant Church
12800 Coal Creek Pkwy, Bellevue, 98006
Please Note: Saturday, 1-4pm

Our Mission

Because Bridge Disability Ministries honors the God-given dignity of people living with disabilities, we build relationships to alleviate isolation and enrich our churches and communities.

Save the Date!

Saturday, March 8th, 2014

Annual Rock 'n' Roll Dance

Newport Covenant Church (address on left)

Cartoon Caper!



Come dressed as your favorite cartoon character!

Questions? Contact Linda: lindam@bridgemin.org or
(425)885-1006 ext.118

WE CAN HELP

Parents & Guardians of people with Developmental Disabilities:
Our Guardianship Agency now offers private pay case management.
For more information call: (425) 885-1006 x102