



Connections

The Newsletter of Bridge Disability Ministries

Summer, 2013

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Independence Day 2013, by Jack Staudt, Executive Director

Independence means many different things to folks. At this summer holiday time of year in the USA it is a celebration of our freedom as a nation and a people. To a typical teenager it may be a driver's license. To a recent graduate from Issaquah High School, independence is an old Dodge van modified to allow her to drive her power wheel chair right in. To her family, the van is also the independence to take the whole family shopping, or perhaps on a short July 4th excursion.

This family received the van last week, and some time ago a power wheel chair from the Meyer Mobility Center. The van will allow Jae to realize a dream in the fall. She will use a well earned Rotary Scholarship to attend college. Jae knows a lot more about the value of "independence" than most of us. Jae lives with the physical limitations imposed upon her by cerebral palsy. Yet she pushes the limitations away with her intellectual skills, energy, and joyful appreciation of the freedoms she has in this country; freedom to attend college, and have accessibility in her community. These are things she lacked in her native country, which led her family to bring her to America.

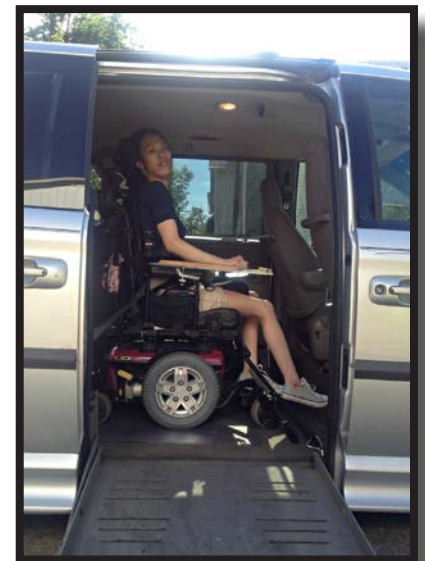
Far too often we take for granted the freedoms we have in the USA. The blessings of our Constitution, of our commitment to equal rights, and to ADA laws that make our Homeland accessible to Jae, and to the other 1 in 5 Americans living with a disability. But even with these blessings, some of us need a bit more help and I am very proud to work within this ministry that can offer free power chairs, or caregiver aids like a shower bench, or the van we received as a gift that is now serving its third family as a loaner.

Access to a knee walker, like the one my temporarily disabled wife is using after surgery, makes a caregiver's job a lot easier. And a peripheral benefit of one's limited disability is a keen awareness of this blessing of independence. The simple limitations my wife and I face for a few months are magnified tenfold and more for most of the folks that come to the Meyer Mobility Center. This year the demand of our free service devices has grown 40%. We are thankful for all the donors that bring used items for repair and reuse by those who so dearly need and deserve these items. If you or a loved one has an old item in the storage locker, bring it to Bridge and we'll give it some "TLC" and allow that device to bring independence to wonderful folks like Jae and her family.

P.S. If you would like to donate to Bridge, and / or send a gift to the "Van Fund for Jae Kim", you can visit our webpage www.BridgeMin.Org. Just go to "Make a Gift" and follow the instructions.

PTA Moms in Issaquah are raising funds to purchase a new van for Jae, and you can also make a gift by stopping in at any U.S. Bank Branch and ask for the Bridge Ministries "Van Fund for Jae Kim".

Enjoy the summer holidays, and in the days to come – acknowledge and savor your independence – and then do what you can to lend a hand to those struggling to maintain their independence. You have the ability to give life changing independence to a person living with a disability. If you would like to learn how, please contact me.



Dreams Really Can Come True

by Linda Martin, Spiritual Care Programs & Volunteer Administrator

My brothers and sisters, you were chosen to be free. But don't use your freedom as an excuse to live in sin. Instead, serve one another in love.
- Galatians 5:13

It's been 4 years since I met Jack Staudt at the summer Kirkland Carnival event. I remember standing in the glaring July sun telling a man in a Hawaiian shirt and straw hat about my search for a welcoming congregation that would accept my son who lives with autism. He told me about Bridge's effort to combat isolation in the lives of people living with disabilities and connect them with faith communities. I knew that this was something I was called to be involved in. A short time later I was offered a position with the Spiritual Care Ministry at Bridge.

I'd been a single parent for 8 years at that point, and had never received respite. It's now been 12 years, and I have no reason to believe I ever will. For the unfamiliar, respite is provision of skilled caregiving to enable parents of special needs children to get a break. Studies have demonstrated the necessity for respite care to preserve the mental and physical health of caregivers engaged in long term care of family members. But I've been told there's a waiting list of over 11,000 ahead of me, so they're unlikely to ever get that far down the list with recent budget cuts to state programs for disabilities. So whenever I've been in the room with people planning programs for families with special needs, I've brought up the need for respite. No one knew how desperate the need is for this vital service more than I. Raising a high demands special needs child requiring attention 24/7/365 can be exhausting – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

I think Jack probably heard me say "what parents need is respite care" dozens of times in the past 4 years. I brought it up at every opportunity. I knew it was going to be a hard sell though, because providing care for a child with autism can be very difficult and challenging. It would take a lot of resources to pull it off, and we don't have a lot of resources – especially with the dip in the economy in recent years. The staff was stretched to the limit, funding for a new program non-existent, even volunteers were harder to come by as Bridge has been stretched thinner and thinner. But I kept talking and praying about it and seeking solutions. I had a dream that a combination of Bridge know-how, volunteer energy, and church support could be harnessed to allow at least a small period of respite time to beleaguered parents while not compromising on the quality of care for their kids.

I didn't really feel like I was making a lot of headway until Jack traveled back to Chicago to take care of his young grandson who, as it happens, also lives with autism, to give his daughter and son-in-law a break. When Jack returned, he looked wiped out. With wide eyes he described trying to keep up with a child who moved non-stop and never seemed to need rest. He told me it was far more difficult than he thought it was going to be, and that it gave him a new appreciation of what parents of special needs kids go through. I could be imagining it, but it seemed to me that he was much more receptive to the idea that parents desperately need respite from then on!

The time came to plan our next retreat for families with special needs kids in the transitional years (youth to adulthood), and I reintroduced the idea of providing respite for the parents and an appropriate program for the youth while they were away. After some discussion among the staff on the planning team, we decided to do a Spectrum Respite Retreat for Tweens and Teens on the autism spectrum. Jack's church, Holy Spirit Lutheran, graciously agreed to provide the venue, we set the date for April 13th, and then the real work began. We'd done retreats where parents were right on the premises, handy in case of emergency. But this was the first time we'd be allowing the parents to leave their vulnerable kids in our charge, a responsibility we didn't take lightly.

Well, we did figure it all out. We partnered with other organizations that had expertise, resources and energy to contribute: Seattle Children's Autism Center, Bethesda Lutheran Communities, HeART of the Spectrum, Band of Brothers Northwest and the Redmond Chorale. We designed a program with the specific needs of people with autism in mind and served 20 families, giving the parents a three hour break on a Saturday while we entertained the 22 kids with fun activities they enjoyed. It all worked. Sure, we thought of ways to improve our next respite retreat. But it worked. We got some really great feedback from parents about how fantastic it was to get a little break, and we had a very gratifying experience providing for their kids. We also got wonderful feedback from volunteers who found the experience rewarding, and said they'd like to come back and help again at our next respite retreat. And a dream came true.



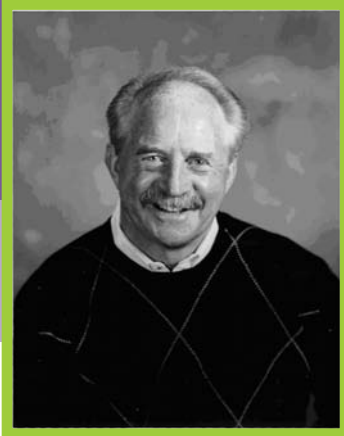
We're now in the process of writing a 'How To' on setting up a respite retreat that other organizations and churches can use as a guide to create their own respite event. Please join with us in prayer that God will bless this effort so that parents throughout the Puget Sound area will be supported in this wonderful way.

For more details on our Spectrum Respite Retreat, please see our Blog: <http://andyouwillblessed.blogspot.com>.

LEGENDARY UW FOOTBALL COACH HONORARY CHAIR OF BENEFIT DINNER!

We are proud to announce that Jim Lambright, well known for his years of coaching the University of Washington's Huskies, has graciously accepted our invitation to serve as Honorary Chair of Bridge's Annual Benefit Dinner & Auction.

In the years following his coaching career, Jim has been in great demand as a motivational speaker. He has two stepsons who live with disabilities, so he has a heart for the mission of Bridge and desires to support our efforts on behalf of the people we serve.



Please join us in welcoming Jim at our Benefit Dinner October 19th, as we join together in an evening of inspiration and fundraising for our worthy cause.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT MARCIA:
MARCIAB@BRIDGEMIN.ORG OR (425)885-1006 EXT.107



Passages

We at Bridge are grateful for the opportunity to serve and work with many wonderful people in our ministries for people living with disabilities. It is with mixed joy and sadness that we say so long for now to those who have passed recently – joy to see them go on to the Lord, and sadness because we miss seeing them here in this world where they have temporarily left us behind. Whether they are the people we serve in Spiritual Care, Mobility and Guardianship, or volunteers, donors and other supporters who come alongside us in service to them - we thank God for them all.

God is working in you. He wants your plans and your acts to be in keeping with his good purpose.

- Philippians 2:13

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Bridge's programs, which would not exist without their efforts. If you are interested in volunteering and would like to learn more about our volunteer opportunities, please contact Linda at lindam@bridgemin.org or (425) 885-1006, ext. 118.

Thank you!



In Memoriam

*Laura Dahl
Valerie Hawkins
Betty Martin
Caryn Martin
Brendon Mihovilich
Gary Samuelson
Ashley Simmonds
Russell Smedley
Moorfield Storey
Harry Woodrow*

They will be missed!



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 - 4:30pm)

www.bridgemin.org

bridge@bridgemin.org

Mark Your Calendars...

Sunday Evening Celebrations (4-6pm)

- July 28th Wacky Wheelays Celebration
Lake Washington High School Track & Field
12033 NE 80th St, Kirkland, 98033
Please Note: 1-4pm
- August 18th Summer Picnic Celebration
Game Farm Park
3030 R St, Auburn 98002
Please Note: 12-2pm
- Sept. 22nd Hosted by Calvin Presbyterian Church
18826 3rd Ave NW, Shoreline, 98177

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, October 19th, 2013

Annual Benefit Dinner & Auction



Meydenbauer Center

11100 NE 6th Street, Bellevue, WA 98004

Contact Marcia: marciab@bridgemin.org or (425)885-1006 ext.107

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