

It's in our power to change.

THE INITIATOR

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Restoring Freedom, Building Community: The Real Impact of a Ramp

This past summer, Comcast, the Michigan Senate and Disability Network/Michigan (of which DAKC is a member) came together to start the Michigan Mobility & Accessibility Partnership (MMAP). It started with an idea and phone call.

When State Senator Mark Jansen was in the State House, he participated in the "Reps for Ramps" project through which members of the House of Representatives built wheelchair ramps for Michigan residents. Sen. Jansen wanted to do the same in the Senate to help people regain freedom and independence. So he made a call to DAKC's Executive Director, David Bulkowski.

To make MMAP a reality, Comcast stepped forward with a generous \$30,000 contribution to build the ramps in Rockford, Monroe, Flint, Lansing and Rochester Hills. To identify local ramp recipients, DAKC got in contact with the centers for independent living (CIL) in those communities. "We [the CILs] understand the needs of families and individuals who face challenges with mobility and physical access and, unfortunately, we know the many people who are on our waiting lists to receive the help needed to remove these barriers," said Bulkowski.

At DAKC, we evaluate an individual and their home to determine the type of ramp needed then work with community partners to locate resources to make the ramp a reality. While assistance programs exist for individuals with disabilities of low income, little assistance is available for those just above income requirements. Oftentimes people are put on a waiting list for a ramp (and other equipment and modifications)

because they cannot afford the entire cost of the ramp. They may remain on the waiting list for a few days, weeks or even over a year.

The ramp recipient selected in Kent County was Lori, a woman with Multiple Sclerosis who uses a wheelchair for mobility. Lori qualified for one assistance program, however, due to program restrictions, she was asked to choose between a modified bathroom or a ramp. She chose the modified bathroom and then was placed on a waiting list for the needed ramp. For over a year Lori seldom left her home. When she did, her husband carried her in and out of the house and up and down the steps.

When DAKC contacted Lori about MMAP and the opportunity to receive a ramp, she was overjoyed. On the ramp build day, the fifteen member crew from Comcast, Senate Staff, Home Repair Services and the Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan along with DAKC showed up to not only build the ramp, but also assist with some exterior painting and landscaping. In addition, two camera crews and a reporter or two were there to capture the story. In the early afternoon, Lori tested out the new ramp. "I have waited over a year for a ramp. It was such a nice surprise to hear it would finally happen," she said. "I am so grateful. It will free up my life and increase my independence."

"Being able to freely come and go from your own home is something many of us take for granted," said Sen. Jansen at the Rockford project. "By joining forces with Comcast, Disability Advocates of Kent County and dedicated volunteers, we helped improve mobility and accessibility for a Michigan family."



Comcast

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--Lori



Dan Salas from PositivelyMichigan.net produced a wonderful piece on the ramp build. Visit www.positivelymichigan.net. The story is titled Community of Volunteers.

For more information about home assessments for ramps or other home modifications and adaptive equipment, contact Lisa Nelson-Williams at 616-949-1100, ext. 255 or lisa.n@dakc.us.



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Who we are

Most people equate disability with limitations. But it's our job to change the perceptions and realities that prevent people with disabilities from sharing in the community. Every year, we provide training, mentoring, and referrals to help people with disabilities and their families live productive lives. Because disability touches so many people, we also work on a larger scale, helping governments and businesses make changes that benefit not just those with disabilities, but everyone in the community.

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Volunteers

We rely on our wonderful volunteers for so much of what we accomplish. To find an opportunity that fits your skills, interests, and schedule, please contact:

The Volunteer Coordinator
616 949 1100 Ext. 247

Donations

As a non-profit organization, we welcome gifts of all sizes. You may make a tax-deductible contribution by visiting www.dakc.us or mailing your contribution to:

DAKC (Disability Advocates of Kent County)
3600 Camelot Drive SE
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Join Us

Your gifts of time and resources can help us change everything for the better.