

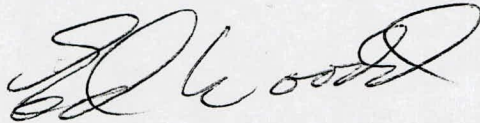
A RAMP IS A STEP AHEAD

By
Scott Dight
Eleventh Grade
[REDACTED]

School Address
Charles City High School
Salsbury Ave.
Charles City, Iowa 50616

Home Address
[REDACTED]
Charles City, Iowa 50616

Teacher

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Wood".

January 12, 1979

A RAMP IS A STEP AHEAD

A ramp is a step ahead not only in the physical sense of being an easier way to get in and out of buildings, but also to enable handicapped "walking up the ladder of life." Ramps are the vehicles to bring the handicapped to full potential as full and functioning citizens in our society.

Handicapped people are denied access to many facilities which others take for granted. Some of the major architectural barriers that handicapped people face are; steps into buildings, stairwells in buildings, access to sports arenas, curbs on streets, and public restrooms. These barriers can easily be overcome.

The State of Iowa has several laws which are helpful to handicapped individuals. Chapter 104A of the State Code of Iowa, for instance, talks about ramps, non slip surface floors, door widths, restrooms, and drinking fountain heights. These things are all very important to someone who is handicapped because it means that they will be able to get around in the community, pay their bills, go shopping, or even the simple task of getting a drink of water.

Chapter 104A went into effect on July 4, 1965, for any new "...public and private buildings and facilities, temporary and permanent, used by the general public."¹ But, to date, no

¹-----,-----, Code of Iowa, 1977, Vol. I, Chapter 104A.5, p. 588

legislature has been initiated to make existing structures accesable to the handicapped.

According to Judy O'Donahoe, Attorney at Law, Charles City, Iowa, "other than asking each business to provide handicapped individuals with the rights they deserve, is to get petitions and public support behind us to put pressure upon them."

Ramps have made me able to be a functioning member of the community in which I live. I understand the problems handicapped people face in everyday life. I was born handicapped. I have four artificial limbs.

Housing and care facilities for those who need it can be and is a problem. Chapter 104A of the State Code of Iowa also says that ten percent or one unit, whichever is greater, in any new dwelling facilities with five or more units must be accesible to the handicapped. This is a good law, but according to an article that appeared early last year in the Des Moines Register, the rent for such a place is above the handicapped person's ability to pay.

Right now handicapped students have many rights in public education, but school systems and teachers still have some prejudicial feelings to rid themselves of. (3)

The main issue now, as far as students are concerned, is the National Law concerning mainstreaming. P.L. 94-142 and Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act says that mental ability is not allways affected by physical limitations. This is an excellant law.

The first place to start in the process of helping handicapped people become more active and socially accepted in the community is to let the younger generation set the examples.

As far as the Charles City School District is concerned, I feel they have done everything to help me along. The main step was when they installed an elevator at the Junior High School for the convenience of the handicapped.

Handicapped people have lobbied and will continue to lobby for the rights that most Americans take for granted: a drink of water from a drinking fountain, access to public transportation, an easier way in and out of buildings, the right for equal education, and the right to feel proud that they are American citizens. For this to happen each individual person in this great country of ours must realize and be willing to understand the handicapped person's problems, needs, and desires in everyday life. As Dale Koehler, who is a County Supervisor in Flyod County said, "Things need to gchange...and now changes are going to occur."

Even the person who has a discriminatory attitude toward handicapped people should remember one thing, handicaps do not discriminate. They can happen to anyone at any time.

Ramps will pave the way to bridge the gap between society and the handicapped....

SPEAKING OUT---VOICES OF DISABLED PEOPLE

By
Scott Dight
Twelfth Grade

School Address
Charles City High School
Salsbury Ave.
Charles City, Iowa 50616

Home Address
[REDACTED]
Charles City, Iowa 50616

Teacher



English Instructor
December 14, 1979

SPEAKING OUT---VOICES OF DISABLED PEOPLE

Ever since humans developed a vocabulary and started to communicate with each other, we have been speaking out on what we believe is right and/or what should be done to change something to make it right. That's where the voices of disabled people come in. It is time that the average citizen sat up, took notice, and listened to the legitimate complaints that handicapped people have.

With alot of attention lately being focused on "individual rights", it is surprising that many people have not or will not listen to handicapped people. Some people who are involved with making decisions that will effect the handicapped, do not always know what they are doing.

Accessibility rights of handicapped individuals is one thing that people are talking about. This encompasses the architectural barriers that we hear so much about. Only by making the public aware of these barriers and finding ways to solve these barriers are we effectively helping handicapped people.

A much more important right which handicapped people are speaking out on is the opportunity to be as much a participatory citizen as possible, the right to be independant, and the same respect from other Americans as they expect from each other.

Education is the key to making a handicapped person independant. By giving handicapped people a chance for an equal education and by educating the public on handicapped peoples wants, needs, and desires, we are helping the handicapped to come out of their shells and actively be involved in social organizations.

Thirty years ago it was unheard of for a handicapped child to go to school. Even as recently as ten years ago all handicapped students, whether they were classified as severe & profound, or a learning disabled, were all put in one special room. Well, things have changed completely around now, with the Public Law concerning Mainstreaming in effect. If it had not been for handicapped people standing up and saying, "We deserve the same chance for an education too", we would still be living in the dark ages.

There are very few colleges in the United States which are totally barrier free and accessible to handicapped people. But many schools are working hard to become more adaptable to an individual person's needs. Take Iowa State University for example. For several years they have been trying to overcome some of the architectural barriers they have. They also have a Handicapped Student Organization, which helps handicapped students adjust to college life.

Handicapped people do not expect handouts or a free ride, but do expect the chance to prove to themselves and to others that they can make a living for themselves.

It has been PROVEN that handicapped people work harder than normal people do. This is because they exert more energy to overcome barriers in their day to day living than do normal people. Handicapped people also have better attendance records and usually have a better attitude about their work than the average workers.

By "speaking out" and telling other people and the world about different types of handicaps and handicapped people in general, we are educating them on how handicapped people expect to be treated and on what they are like. They

are people who have needs first and are disabled second.

I understand many of these problems that handicapped people have. I was born handicapped. I have four artificial limbs.

These freedoms are all individual rights which belong to all people, but handicapped people in particular are directly effected by them.

We must persue this practice of "Speaking Out" and letting our voices be heard. Whether it be by letters, face to face confrontations, or to the point of peaceful demonstrations. Handicapped people must speak out until all things are done, and done correctly, so that they will achieve an equal status in society with the rest of the people.