



AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

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“A TRAVELING WE WILL GO”

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The upcoming Labor Day weekend marks the official end of the summer travel season, so we asked some AgrAbility consumers to tell us a bit about the traveling they've been up to! Although vacations are often challenging if you or a member of your family has a disability, these consumers have wonderful adventures that made up for the struggles. This month's resources are focused on information that could help make traveling with a disability a bit easier. (EH)

ABOUT MILLIE: Erin Haafke

Millie Lill knows a lil 'bout traveling. In fact, she has 350,000 miles to her credit in the past couple of years! So many miles, because last June she married Uno Jaan Lill, a Canadian truck driver and the light of her life. Millie goes everywhere with Jaan and says that her job isn't driving, but running up the cell phone bill.

Millie had polio as a child, married young, and had three sons. She and her first

husband farmed near Buck Grove until his death in 1993. Because of her polio, she wore a brace until she was 10, then didn't need it again until post polio hit in her mid-40s. Now she uses a powered chair part of the time, because she experiences fatigue as part of her post-polio syndrome. Millie moved to Dow City to be closer to one of her sons and because she felt more secure knowing help is close by. She came into contact with the AgrAbility program a few years ago when she needed a ramp to get in and out of her home. AgrAbility staff also helped Millie with a plan to move her office to a more accessible location.

Along with her duties of keeping in touch with her family, Millie is involved with several support groups, writes for a couple of post polio newsletters, and has written and self-published three books of humorous essays and a book of poetry. You can email Millie at lillmillie@netscape.net. (EH)

HAVE SCOOTER, WILL TRAVEL: Millie Lill

My husband is a long haul trucker from Canada. I love to travel with him, but sometimes when we stop at the truck stops, it's too late to get into the handicapped stalls. Yes, truck stops do have them. Most have two, some have four. But if we can't park there and Jaan can't get the illegally parked truckers to vacate, we have to park in

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the back of the lot. I can walk, but not very far. So we got a little travel scooter to take along. It comes apart into four small parts that will fit in the compartment under the bed, the 'jockey box,' accessible from the outside of the truck.

We've had some interesting encounters with the handicapped parking spots. Jaan has become an advocate for all disabled persons. If a truck stop doesn't have the handicapped parking, he will talk to the manager. Jaan is a tall, silver-haired, rather imposing man and when he speaks in his deep authoritative voice, people listen. I consider him my most valuable assistive device. He politely but firmly informs the manager of the need for the parking stalls and on several occasions, we have returned to find the stalls there.

People have strange ideas about what constitutes accessibility. One night, we were late getting into the truck stop and had to park in the far corner of the lot. Jaan assembled my scooter, and we headed for the truck stop's restaurant. Everything looked good, until we rounded a corner in the building to find the sign for the restaurant pointing up a flight of stairs. Since I can still walk, we left the little scooter in a safe spot and walked up to the restaurant. As is his wont, Jaan spoke to the waitress about accessibility. She assured him that if we had used the other door to the building, we'd have had no problem at all in taking the scooter into the restaurant. Jaan thanked her for the information and decided to use the other entrance when we came in for coffee in the morning.

The next morning, we headed back to the building. There was a little path, sort of a goat track, up a steep hill and around to the other side of the building. Surely this is not what the waitress meant! I couldn't possibly get the scooter up that nearly vertical, narrow and gravelly path! Jaan decided to go that way while I went all the way around

the building with my scooter. We'd meet inside.

What a ride that was! I discovered that the route around the building involved my going about half a mile back on the highway, sharing the road with trucks and cars. This little scooter is very low to the ground and, since I'd never even thought of using it in traffic, I had no flag on it. I sat as tall as my 5'3" frame allowed, but even so, the top of my head was alarmingly close to the same height as the bumpers of the vehicles whizzing past. By the time I met Jaan, my heart rate was in the quadruple digits and my hands were almost permanently welded to the handlebars. However, the waitress was right...once you got there, if you survived, the building was perfectly accessible from that side.

On the ride back to the truck, I cut through a number of parking lots and went down a little dirt road. Next time, we vowed, we would get more complete information on whether or not the 'accessibility' included risking life and limb. (ML)

THE FOUR GOLDEN GIRLS: Erin Haafke

LuAnn Hoth likes to travel and so she'd planned for months to go to New York City. Extra planning was required because LuAnn uses a wheelchair due to post-polio syndrome. In May, the extra planning paid off. The "Four Golden Girls," as referred to by their family, are LuAnn, her aunt, and her two sisters. They travel together often. The Golden Girls took a bus to New York City from Pennsylvania where one of LuAnn's sisters lives. They stayed in a barely accessible hotel room, took a "hop on, hop off" tour bus around the city, went on a boat tour, rode on the subway, and traveled on the city buses. The highlights of their trip were going to Ellis Island, Trump Towers, Times Square, the Statue of Liberty, and the Broadway show The Lion King. Most

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things were accessible according to LuAnn, but the subway was one mode of transportation she doesn't recommend if you use a wheelchair.

"It feels good to recognize the buildings and landmarks that I see on TV," LuAnn remarked.

LuAnn is a member of the Freewheelers group that meets several times a year for food and conversation in northeast Iowa. Their group welcomes visitors and new members at any time. Look for information about meetings posted in the AgrAbility newsletters. If you'd like to know more about her trip, email LuAnn at luhoth@iowatelecom.net. (EH)

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME: Betsy Norland

Hello, my name is Betsy Norland and my husband, Mike, and I farm near Cylinder, Iowa. We have two kids, Amy is 14 years old and Neal is 12 years old. Neal happens to have cerebral palsy. He uses an electric wheelchair, manual wheelchair, reversible walker, forearm crutches, or walking on his knees to get around.

This summer we took a quick overnight trip to see a Minnesota Twins baseball game and some relatives at the Metrodome. Since this was the first time we have gone to a professional baseball game, we didn't know what to expect. To get around in the Metrodome we decided to push Neal in his manual wheelchair. In busy public areas, this gives Neal a chance to look around and not think about "driving." The Metrodome has revolving doors to enter, so we motioned to one of the ticket clerks and he quickly took care of us. Once inside, Neal was able to have a seat with a railing to hang onto if he needed to steady himself. The stairs to the seating dead-ended at the railing so I just put Neal's wheelchair near the railing. That

way we could keep an eye on the wheelchair, but it was not in anyone else's way.

The highlight of the trip for Neal happened when we first arrived, while the Kansas City Royals were warming up. An outfielder saw Mike helping Neal down the stairs to the seats. He gestured to them and asked, "Do you want this?" Mike and Neal said, "OK." He tossed up a baseball to Neal! The outfielder wasn't wearing a shirt with numbers on it so we don't know who he was, but we certainly said thank you.

Back at the hotel, Neal primarily used his walker. When we made the reservations, we mentioned we had a child with a disability and we needed a ground floor room. The room, while in excellent proximity to the front desk and breakfast area, had a narrow walkway between the beds and dresser that prevented Neal from using his walker in it. The bathroom was large and accessible, but Neal would have had difficulty reaching the controls of the shower from the bench on the opposite end of the tub without help from his Dad.

For breakfast the hotel had a variety of things to eat, but everything was served in Styrofoam bowls and cups, so I had to help Neal eat. Next time we travel I will remember his adaptive utensils, bowl and cup.

Having never been to a baseball game and the fact that our kids aren't really baseball fans we didn't know how this trip would turn out. But we all had a nice time and I think we would do it again. Oh yeah, the Twins beat the Royals 4-0! If you'd like to contact us, our email is bnorland@ncn.net. (BN)

RESOURCES

The Transportation and Security Administration's site for persons with

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disabilities and medical conditions has information specific to assisting people when traveling by air. The site also has information regarding travel by other methods, but it's not specific to disability or medical conditions.

www.tsa.gov/public/display?theme=156 or call toll free 1-866-289-9673.

The Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality (SATH) is an educational and advocacy organization committed to raising awareness, removing physical and attitudinal barriers, and expanding travel opportunities in the United States and beyond. Visit their website for more information www.sath.org/ or call 212-447-7284.

Independent Living Institute: Vacation Home Exchange provides a website to post vacation destinations. You can view the listings and make contacts for renting or exchanging accessible homes. www.independentliving.org/vacaswap.html

According to their website, **Wilderness Inquiry** is an organization that offers a wide variety of canoe, sea kayak, dogsled, raft, horse pack and hiking trips throughout North America and the World. Uniquely, they make the outdoors accessible to everyone, including persons with disabilities. They are based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Contact them at 1-800-728-0719 or www.wildernessinquiry.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Farm Progress Show

August 31st, September 1st and 2nd

7:30am to 5:00pm

Alleman, Iowa

*come see the Universal Design Bathroom exhibit, Easter Seals staff, and Extension staff

Freewheelers Luncheon

Saturday, October 2nd at 1:00pm

Waverly Pizza Ranch

Everyone shares expenses

Attention Caregivers!!! Powerful Tools for Caregivers

is an educational series designed to provide you with the tools you need to take care of yourself. This program helps family caregivers to: reduce stress, improve their self-confidence, better communicate their feelings, balance their life, increase their ability to make tough decisions and locate helpful resources.

Upcoming regional workshops will be held in Spencer, Albia, Mason City, Onawa, Des Moines, Council Bluffs, Ames, and New Hampton. Call Erin for details at 515-294-8522. Registration is limited.

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IOWA AGRABILITY - A joint effort of ISU Extension and the Rural Solutions Program of Easter Seals Iowa. The program can help farm family members with a disability stay in farming.

This newsletter from the Iowa AgrAbility Project will be sent monthly to AgrAbility families and other interested individuals. Please send comments and suggestions to:

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Iowa AgrAbility Project

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