

## I Had Never Heard of SAWs.

*Edited letter from Alexandra Eads*



I was blessed to have a wonderful, close family. We didn't have much but we always knew one thing and that was love. In 2007 when our mother suffered two strokes, my brother moved in with her and together we were able to keep her at home to care for her.

When our mother passed, we were heartbroken but managed to keep things "real." My brother continued to live in our family home. In 2010, I had to rush my brother to the ER where he spent a good while in ICU with kidney failure. He has been a Type 1 diabetic since he was a child. All of those decades took a hard, unknowing toll, on his body and between out of control diabetes and hypertension, his kidneys shut down. To this day he goes through Hemodialysis 3 days a week.

In September of last year, he was discovered to have an extremely compromised vascular system. He sadly endured two amputations of his left leg. He was so disabled and living in a home not built with "people with disabilities" in mind. We were literally in a panic as to how we would get him to so many doctor appointments, further surgeries, and above all else, dialysis, once he returned home from in-house rehabilitation. How were we going to get him in and out of the house for all of this? How?

After one too many exhausting days, both physically and mentally, I was going to bed crying and waking up crying...and though I pray every single day, this day was very different. I had to "Let go and let God" and prayed

hard on my knees to Him to guide me to find a way to better help him. I had no idea what He would lead me to that particular day.

To this day I cannot say that it was anything but God's hands on mine as I searched the Internet, guiding me to the answer I prayed so hard for and found "SAWs Ramps." I had never heard of SAWs. I made one phone call to SAWs and our lives changed forever. Sharon Colucci returned my call that same day. We spoke at great length over several days and it was determined that my brother was eligible to be blessed with a ramp from SAWs. We could have never afforded this ramp between us otherwise. She moved heaven and earth to get this beautiful ramp in for my brother. The crew from SAWs were absolute angels, truly. They worked for nearly 12

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hours to get it done in time for his dialysis the next day. Their crew chief Jim said, "We will stay till midnight if we need to so you can get him to dialysis tomorrow." They returned the following day as promised to finish the railing and the finishing touches.

SAWs gave my brother back his independence, which greatly increased his quality of life. It gives him hope to endure. Now with this gift from SAWs, he can ride up

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# Freedom to leave your home is a luxury for some.

*Adapted from a WTWO broadcast, Terre Haute, IN*

**S**AWs is a group dedicated to building mobility ramps for low income individuals who have disabilities.

“What we found is that there are literally thousands in that circumstance in the state of Indiana, and they need help being able to get in and out of their homes,” said Servants at Work (SAWs) Co-Founder, Richard Hagarty.

“What we’re trying to do is give people access to their homes. So they can age-in-place and they can stay in their homes and not have to be displaced and be able to get in and out and a fairly independent bases.”

Like 88-year old Wilbur Kern, a Korean War veteran who had a ramp, but it was too steep for him to use. “When I carry things on my Rollator, it gets away from me,” Kern.

To make his journey safer folks from the community got straight to work removing the old 24-foot structure and building a longer ramp to meet ADA guidelines. “I am very blessed to have met this man. I want to thank Larry Ridge, Karen Ha, Josh Powers, the 8 Rose Hulman students and Julia Piper that came out to not



only bless my day but Wilbur’s,” said David Piper, SAWs Project Manager

“I think it’s a wonderful occasion to be able to get that because if things get really out of control you really can’t get in and out of the

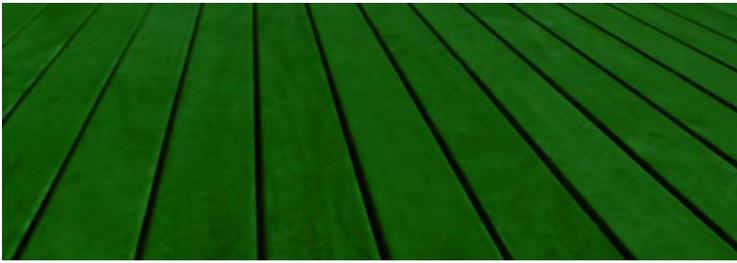
house,” said Kern.

This work couldn’t get done without many helping hands. “It is something that requires a lot of hands because there’s a lot of need,” said Hagarty.

SAWs has built more than 100 ramps in Terre Haute but they still need more volunteers.

“We need more people to help get this done. It’s very simple work and you don’t have to be a carpenter,” said Hagarty.





# News & Notes



## Sweet 17 in Putnam County

The SAWs team completed the 17th ramp of this season on September 17th. This ramp was built for a couple who have much difficulty accessing their home. As Saturdays lately have turned into a regular cycle of rainy mornings, the build was started about a half hour late while we waited for the rain to stop. Even then it was difficult working with the wood as it was wet with rain. However, we finished by around 11:00 due to our great group of volunteers. The homeowners were ecstatic with the ramp and are sure their access will be significantly improved!



## Al Erickson Receives Allstate Helping Hands Award!

Al Erickson and his wife Carole retired to Carmel in 2007. While Al plays golf and tennis and occasionally travels with his wife, he spends a great deal of each week volunteering in his community. Al found his passion volunteering with SAWs. Al serves on the Board of Directors, is the Secretary, Chairman of the Finance Committee and a Project Manager, who leads ramp builds. Congratulations Al and thank you for your service to the community.

*Allstate Insurance – Ranj Puthran Agency*



## Another Ramp Build in the Record Books!

Thanks to NIPSCO and SAWs for making this possible. Our teams, along with SAWs and Ron Harper completed this awesome build! A special shout out to student leader Andrew Murray for staying onsite after school until the project was complete! (The Crossing School for Business and Entrepreneurship will complete several SAWs ramps in the Kokomo, IN area in its first year in partnership with SAWs. They will also build ramps for those who can afford one and use those funds for administrative costs and to offset the cost of a SAWs ramp.)



## Dear SAWs,

“Today several volunteers showed up at my home to tear down and rebuild us a good wheelchair ramp. They worked through sun and rain and did an amazing job. Dave Piper and his group of volunteers are truly amazing people. As a disabled person who struggles to get up stairs and with the existing ramp before today literally falling apart, this amazing sturdy ramp means more than words can say. May the good Lord bless you all for what you are doing and continue to provide for folks who are unable to have access to their homes.”

- Teresa L.

*(Continued)*

and down this beautiful ramp, get to the driveway and into the car with the ease he would not otherwise have. He even takes great joy that he can ride to the street to get his own mail. Little things that most of us take for granted, SAWs gave back to him with this beloved ramp.

Before this ramp, he would literally have to crawl on his belly up very steep steps, always fearful of hitting his stump. Then once inside, it was having to get him up from the floor and somehow, through the grace of God, into his wheelchair. Getting him down the steps and up from the ground, inclement weather notwithstanding, was the unthinkable. It was a nightmare with the everyday fear of injuring himself. Dialysis days were the worst because he has no strength on those days.

God blessed us by guiding us to SAWs and to anyone

reading this, please understand that all of these Angels involved are volunteers. They give of their own time and their God given expertise to work very hard to make others, such as my brother, “whole” again to live with independence within their own homes where they would not be able to otherwise. I know without a shadow of doubt that without this blessing from SAWs, my brother would have had no choice but to move into a nursing home.

We will forever be in their debt for their kindness, their hearts, and their unyielding hard work. Anything that anyone can do to help them with anything will be a gift that will continue to give beyond any comprehension.

With a grateful heart from a grateful sister,

Thank you SAWs.

In God’s grace and love, thank you.

Alexandra Eads



# Not All Prisons Have Bars...

## ...Some Just Have Steps

According to the 2010 US Census, 3.3 million people 15 and older use a wheelchair. Another 10 million use a walking aid, such as a cane, crutches or walker. The 2013 American Community Survey data lists 14.3 million people between the ages of 5 to 75 with disabilities are below the poverty line.

SAWs has built over 1,000 ramps across Indiana but we haven't even scratched the surface in terms of the need that is still out there.

Help us free those trapped in the prisons of their own homes. Volunteer opportunities go well beyond building ramps. The work is easy and so rewarding. People in need are waiting for you. Join us.

Contact us at our website  
**[www.SawsRamps.org](http://www.SawsRamps.org)**  
to volunteer or to donate.