

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Hi!

My name is Terry Cramer, and I have Cerebral Palsy. I am the Chairperson for the 2011 Snowflake campaign. The Snowflake Campaign can provide assistive devices to the people of Community Living. Without Snowflake it would be difficult for some of them to have access to this equipment. I want to tell you the story of my life and my friends at Community Living. Before I came to CLI, my life was pretty limited. I had no true concept of accessibility. To get into my house I scooted up the stairs on my bottom. That was then. Now, with CLI, I have an apartment designed just for me. It's on the first floor, has wide doorframes, and a kitchen where I can reach all my appliances. Many of the friends I've made at CLI have other physical and developmental disabilities that CLI is constantly trying to find innovative techniques to assist them in their world.

However, back to me. Once I wake up, I maneuver myself onto my motorized wheelchair and go to Denny's, Masser's or Barbara Fritchie's for breakfast. That motorized wheelchair really opened up the world for me. I like those three restaurants because they serve breakfast for dinner and dinner for breakfast. And you know, my friend Chad could come with me and be served a meal and be able to eat it with his scoop plate and his thick gripped utensil. When he first came to CLI he could not feed himself. With training and encouragement he has learned how to do this with his special utensils.



For both Chad and me, our speech impairments can make understanding us difficult. It can be hard to make our wishes known. I have other CLI friends who have more severe disabilities and their staff would really like to know when they



would like to go to the bathroom, would like to play with a favorite toy, or are hungry. The iPad2 is a wonderful programmable device that can be mounted on a wheelchair with moveable arms which makes it ideal for people with limited flexibility. It has a voice output so when an image of a toy is pushed, the name of the toy is spoken providing excellent reinforcement.

On the needs page, a glass shows on the screen and says "I want a glass of water please." We could talk up a storm.

I guess there are about 20 or so of my CLI friends that could use this great device. These are people who have never received speech therapy as a child, whose speech has thickened as they aged, or people for whom pictures make the only sense cognitively. It can also be used by people with limited or no sight. Its fun to imagine the great food Chad and I could order then!

My activities with my CLI staff include going to auctions to hunt down vintage LPs. But a big overriding concern is whether there will be a wheelchair accessible van available or will my staff have to assist me from my chair to the car and then sling my wheelchair into the trunk of the car. More and more of my CLI friends are using wheelchairs as they continue their busy lives in the community. Over 50 people bowl



weekly. Often 20 people participate in a single Special Olympic sport, sometimes needing 3 handicapped accessible vans. The other Independent Support Program people, like me, need access to wheelchair vans to complete grocery shopping, physician visits, going to the library, religious outings and other quality of life activities. This is a growing concern to me... having access to quality transportation.



And sometimes I need to be reminded that other people had lives that had as limited access to the world as I did. Alexis' family used to just sit her in front of the TV all day. If she cried, they fed her. When she first came to Retirement Our Way (ROW), she was introduced to the Wii. At first there was little she understood about this game. Her attention span is quite short and there were other people in the room that distracted her. But, over time, she learned how to bowl and got a lot of praise. Initially she bowled sitting down, but now she is standing. She looks forward to her time with the Wii and we look forward to Alexis doing a bit of exercise. Now her home wants a Wii to continue her learning and playing.

Animals play an important part in the lives of my friends. My friend Daniel has a very special one. His dog's name



is Joy and she has been trained to detect seizures. Daniel often has a block of seizures at night. Joy detects them and wakes the house manager who administers the appropriate care for Daniel. Animals can be trained to do more and more.

I'm lucky because I am able to get in and out of my shower, and that is what I prefer to take. But if I wanted to take a tub bath, I wouldn't be able to. Now, my friend Bea has a special problem. She has lost bone mass over time, and when she broke her hip, there was no bone left for them to pin her hip to. I overhear her staff say the Bea would just love a good long soak in a tub. And not that we are gossiping, but her housemate, Pat is plump and I bet it would be hard to get her in and out of the tub safely, for both her and the staff. But the staff has shown me pictures of just the thing! A Walk-in tub! It has jets, fills quickly, and would provide relaxation and safety all at the same time. You know, I might reconsider this bath thing!



And, Snowflake will continue to contribute to the needs of the people CLI serves as it has in the past: providing tickets to sporting events and concert, art lesson and golf lesson, recliners and special sheets, meals out and pizza in, stuffed animals and cat food warm slippers and Orioles shirts.

There are so many ways that CLI tries to make everyone's world more accessible. Your donation helps them accomplish that. Greater accessibility equals greater capability. If you have questions I'd love to answer them. I'll be the guy eating breakfast for dinner.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terry Cramer'.

Terry Cramer



Community Living