



Abilities Plus News

2021 Winter Newsletter

A Message from our Board President

Abilities Plus Board of Directors

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The mission of Abilities Plus is

*“to promote
opportunities that
result in independence
and active decision
making for individuals
with disabilities and
their families.”*

Road to the Board

My road to being on the Abilities Plus Board started in the late 1990's. Right after college I worked for the CPA firm that completed the annual audit of Abilities Plus. At that time the Agency was located on Main Street across from the current Abilities Plus resale shop. I remember working with Carol, the Executive Director, and Adele, the Business Manager at the time.

After my family and I moved to Kewanee in 2007, I knew Abilities Plus was a great organization that I wanted to be involved with. A little over 12 years ago I was asked to serve on the Board and I gladly accepted. The agency has continued to grow and serve our client's needs.

CILA (Community Integrated Living Arrangement) group homes continue to be a focus for our agency, with the addition of the 8 bedroom group home when I first started serving on the Board to our newest endeavor in Annawan. Over the next year we will be expanding our CILA program by having our first group home in Annawan. It will be a brand new four bedroom home and we are excited to be part of this community.

With all that has happened in 2020, the Board could not be more proud of the employees of Abilities Plus. The dedicated employees carry out the mission of the agency every single day. On behalf of the Board, I would like to wish everyone a safe and happy 2021.

Randy Carton, Board President



Randy Carton

Henry County Public Transportation

One program that is always on the go at Abilities Plus is Henry County Public Transportation (HCPT). Operating from 7:00 a.m. through 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, the program provided 42,714 trips for local residents last year in Henry, Stark and western Bureau Counties. HCPT currently has 16 drivers, and they are always looking to add additional staff members to their team.

Operating through a grant provided by the Illinois Department of Transportation has allowed the cost of each ride to remain very reasonable. In order to help keep costs low, advertising space is also available on HCPT vehicles. This revenue helps to increase our local match, which in turn increases HCPT's ability to obtain additional funding. If you are interested in purchasing an ad to put on one of the vehicles, please call Gary at (309) 854-7433.

Although 24 hour notice is requested to guarantee a ride, same day service may be available for an added fee. Nonprofit agencies can also contract directly with Henry County Public Transportation to arrange rides and cover costs for their service participants, and HCPT can also provide transportation for businesses. The 14 passenger busses and 5 passenger minivans are all accessible, fitted with either wheelchair lifts or ramps. This public program has undergone some changes due to the pandemic to insure the safety of passengers and drivers. Face masks are currently required and passenger numbers have been reduced. Additionally, the vehicles are sanitized regularly, and individuals are isolated as much as possible.

Through the years, the program has filled an important void, providing valuable service to local individuals for appointments, medical needs, recreational opportunities, and a variety of other events. Unusual transportation requests have also sometimes occurred, with one family noting the service was essential in getting their mother to her 100th birthday party at an accessible venue. Drivers have



Lou Guthrie,
HCPT Van Driver
for the past
13 years, is
preparing to pick
up passengers.

also taken passengers to weddings and funerals that they would have missed without the needed transportation.

*For more information, or to schedule a ride,
please call (309) 854-7433.*

Virtual Annual Awards Banquet

2020 Award Recipients

(We were unable to host our large Annual Awards Banquet due to safety concerns, but recognized some very deserving award recipients virtually this year instead. Please go to our Facebook Page or this link - <https://www.facebook.com/Abilities-Plus-303166903049221>, or YouTube at <https://youtu.be/kw9B1AGU4-s> to view the virtual 30 minute presentation, professionally coordinated by Niko Powe with ill Boy Imagery).

Civic/Community Award - The Wilbert & Carol Keppy Charitable Trust. Wilbert and Carol Keppy farmed for many years in Edford Township. Wilbert passed away in 1994, and Carol in 2000. The charitable trust that was formed after their deaths has provided a little over \$184,000.00 to Abilities Plus since 2004. The Keppy's giving nature continues to live on in the very generous financial support provided to our organization.

Volunteer Award - Karen Bennett of Kewanee, for 15 years of dedicated service as a Resale Shop volunteer. In addition to all of the work Karen has done at our Resale Shop each week, she also volunteered at our annual Holiday Open House for years, along with many other service projects.

Posthumous Award - Bernard Francque, formerly of Geneseo who passed away on 12/19/19. Bernie was a member of the Abilities Plus Board of Directors for 14 years, serving as Vice President, and also as a member of the Executive and Resource Development Committees. He worked tirelessly as a fundraiser and also a "friend raiser," and continued to volunteer for special events after retiring from the Board.

Posthumous Award - Harold Ford, formerly of Geneseo who passed away on 1/20/20. Harold served on the Board of Directors for 17 years, many as Treasurer and a member of the Finance and Executive Committees. He was a trusted member of the Board, who provided significant leadership with fundraising, contributing to the financial health of the organization.

Posthumous Award - Lori Doyle, formerly of Cambridge. Lori passed away on 6/9/20, after being employed at Abilities Plus for over 9 years as a Parent Child Educator and Developmental Therapist. She was an extremely dedicated employee, making a positive difference in the lives of many local children with delays and disabilities and their family members, even while undergoing cancer treatments.

Business Award - Heartfelt Gifts of Kewanee. Since 1993, Heartfelt Gifts has donated to Abilities Plus on a regular basis financially, along with an extensive amount of in-kind donations to the Resale Shop, Carol Blake Center, and 11th Street Group Home.

Special Recognition Award - Barb Talbot of Kewanee. Barb had been agency receptionist, retiring on October 2, 2020 after a little over 40 years of dedicated service. Barb also served as coordinator of the agency's bowling league and was a Special Olympic volunteer.

Achiever of the Year - Christian Laingen of Geneseo. Christian works part time at Abilities Plus, and also volunteers at the Geneseo Community Center. He has a positive, helpful attitude, and puts a great deal of effort into his job tasks. Due to hard work, Christian's work skills have improved significantly over the past year.

Director's Award - Staff of Abilities Plus. All agency employees stepped up in a big way to keep the agency running during these unprecedented times, working at our group homes, providing essential transportation trips, ensuring that agency buildings are clean and sanitized, and doing so much more to keep clients and staff safe during this difficult period.

Also recognized at this event were two new inductees in the Plus One Legacy Society. Marjorie Cox passed away February 28, 2020, leaving a portion of her estate to Abilities Plus. Additionally, Barb Talbot added Abilities Plus as a beneficiary in her Will for a portion of her future estate.



Harold Ford,
Posthumous Award



Karen Bennett,
Volunteer Award



Lori Doyle,
Posthumous Award



Wilbert & Carol Keppy,
Civic/Community Award



Bernie Francque,
Posthumous Award

Directors Award - Staff of Abilities Plus

Barb Talbot,
Special Recognition Award



Christian Laingen
Achiever of the Year Award



Heartfelt Gifts, Inc.
Business Award



**WELCOME TO THE ABILITIES PLUS TEAM
(September—December 2020)**

*Antoinette Axelson, Van Driver
Natalie Clapp, Living Skills Specialist
Jeffrey Eisentrager, Van Driver*

*Sheldon Hartweg, Living Skills Specialist
Chelsea Hulslander, Receptionist
Teagan Lynch, Living Skills Specialist*

*Aimee Peach, Van Driver
Terry Robison, Respite Worker
Sherry Uraski, Van Driver*



Best wishes to former agency Receptionist, Barb Talbot, who retired on October 2nd after over 40 years of dedicated service.



Julie Landwehr, Director of Development, celebrated 40 years of service at Abilities Plus on September 29, 2020.



Eddie DePauw shows a donated face mask he designed at his group home residence.



Erin Trostle joined our residential program this fall, and enjoyed pizza in her new home.



Matt Esser shows a fall picture he completed in art class in Community Day Services.



The Tom Burhorn - Allstate Agency team won the 29th Annual Abilities Plus Golf Outing at Kewanee Dunes on 9/21/20 with a score of 58. Team members were (l to r) Court Marshall, Kyle Graham, Brett Jones & Ed Smith. Thank you to the donors, sponsors and golfers who helped raise a little over \$9,000 for our agency!

Some in our Work Services and Community Day Services programs returned in September, after being home for 5 months. Strict safety precautions are in place, including temperature checks for clients and staff before entering the building, social distancing whenever possible, face masks worn in all common areas, and regular hand washing and sanitizing around the facility. Staff have been very creative, coming up with new and different activities, classes and schedules. We are deeply grateful to all who helped us during this unprecedented time.



Although we were unable to hold the annual Holiday Open House this year, Matt Morrissey and others in Work Services were busy decorating hundreds of holiday evergreen wreaths that were sold to local businesses and individuals.



You can help Abilities Plus by placing Amazon orders using AmazonSmile. Order at smile.amazon.com, and select Abilities Plus (be sure to check Kewanee, IL) as the charitable organization you would like to support. Abilities Plus will then receive 0.5% of all of your eligible purchases. To date, we have received almost \$1,000.00 utilizing this simple donation method!



ABILITIES PLUS

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Abilities Plus Wish List

General

- Bose or similar portable speaker system
- Hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, disinfectant spray
- iPads/Tablets
- New flooring for computer lab
- Paved path to green space area
- Wheelchair swing
- Electric Hoyer Lift with weighing scale

Residential Program

- Gift cards to Kewanee grocery stores and restaurants

Community Day Services

- Gift cards to local restaurants

Work Services Program

- Gift cards to local restaurants

Children's Services

- New iPads or gift cards to purchase them
- Touch and feel books & potty training books
- Leap Frog toys
- Children's books in Spanish
- Funding for YMCA tumbling or swimming sessions
- New toys (stackers, shape sorters, puzzles, puppets, Magnadoodle), pretend dress-up clothes and art & craft supplies for toddlers
- Digital baby scale

Respite Services

- New Tablets

Thank you to the donors who have sent grocery store and restaurant gift cards, as well as movie theater tickets for client use!

Individuals interested in donating requested items are asked to contact Julie Landwehr at (309) 852-4626 or julie@abilitiesplus.org

Remember to like us on facebook & check out our website at www.abilitiesplus.org

