

My Dear Friend Harry

I often saw a man in an electric wheelchair, with a dog following behind, driving down the side of Hwy. 50 in Lake Geneva. This was around 1998. I asked people about him, but no one seemed to know anything. Since the beginning of The Time Is Now to Help my heart has been most moved by helping the handicapped, the elderly and children. This man, seemingly so alone in the world, moved me and touched my heart. I knew I had to meet this man and hear his story.

Not long after, I met this man on a fateful day when my dog was sick at the Lake Geneva Animal Hospital. His dog had just been hit by a car and mine was critically ill. We shared a common grief that day that only someone who loves and loses a pet can feel. I worried about this man and the loss of his seemingly only friend on that day. The wonderful veterinarians, Dr. Scot and Dr. Mona Hodkiewicz, told me about his struggle and asked if there was anything The Time Is Now to Help could do. I learned his name was Harry Bublitz and I knew he needed our friendship and Caring and Sharing. Harry was struggling month to month without enough funds to survive. Harry's landlord had a gracious heart, doing his part to help Harry survive. All of "Us Together" made sure Harry had enough food every month, we kept his utilities on, we made sure his supportive wheel chair was in good repair...

Harry and I began a friendship that would span many years. I often heard Harry speak about his daily trials and struggles. His inability to care for himself was an endless source of frustration. He confessed his family had wanted to institutionalize him, but he fought for his freedom, all while being a quadriplegic. I knew his stubbornness and extreme independence are what kept him going for so long.

Harry spoke about the accident that forever changed his life. The drunk driver that never shared any remorse for the way she changed Harry's life forever. Harry spoke with candor about waking up hanging in a tree, with his spine broke in two places, after being struck by the drunk driver and ejected from his vehicle. This would have been too much to hear for many people, but Harry and I spared no secrets. A year later this same drunk driver hit another innocent victim.

Prior to the accident that changed Harry's life forever, Harry worked in construction, on oil rigs out in the ocean and also at Disneyland. Harry longed for those days of movement and freedom.

Harry's endless trials to find a good caretaker, because his medical needs were many and very labor intensive, went on for years. He had little control of his body from his neck down. He could only lift one arm but had very limited grip. I would have to push his fork into his paralyzed clenched fist. His day would begin with being lifted, changed and sponge bathed. All food had to be cut up and placed before him. I personally think anyone that has decided to drink and drive should have to endure a day in the life of Harry Bublitz. Think how many lives would be spared this fate and worse?

On my first visit to see how Harry lived, I found him lying on the ground after his wheelchair had fallen off some boards his caretaker had propped up to the side door of his rundown old van. Harry would drive his electric wheelchair up two 2'x10's into his old van and tie the wheel chair down with ropes inside. I could not believe this was his only way to get to doctors appointments or grocery shopping in the winter. Harry ended up in the hospital with a concussion after that fall. I felt so bad that this handicapped fellow creation had his life complicated even more by poverty. I hid my tears from Harry and got to work.

The Time Is Now to Help held a fundraiser to bring awareness to the plight of Harry and his need for safe transportation. "You" rose to the occasion and donated generously. Together we were able to provide Harry with his own handicap accessible van. This was his pride and joy for many years. The awareness brought new friends to Harry. There were over a hundred caring people who stepped up to help.

Harry liked to feel needed and wanted. I needed him many times over the years to help with the many severely depressed people we encounter with The Time Is Now to Help. We would make a habit of taking these people to breakfast or lunch with Harry. Harry would often comment when we left the restaurant, "Wow, that person is really negative." Harry had that to say! We can all learn a lesson in that.

A local pastor called me one day and told me he needed my help. An adult man had just lost his father and had lost his brother the year before. It took me two years of intervention to bring this person off the threshold of suicide. Harry was the Hero who made this person realize, "If Harry can be strong, so can I."

Harry also liked to visit the senior citizens in nursing homes. He had a special friendship with many of them. Harry also enjoyed listening to students read to him at St. Francis de Sales school. The best part of this was the lesson these students learned about the man in the wheelchair. He was a real person you could talk to just like anyone else. They learned tolerance for things they did not understand and love by his example. Harry was nicknamed "Wheels" by the kids and he loved the friendship they shared. Harry told me people ignore handicapped people. Harry thought maybe out of embarrassment or not knowing what to say or how to act. Harry would go out for a ride, before being known around town, and he would return home to cry, alone. Why? Because not one human being said, "Hello." Or would even speak to him. Harry would tell me how all of us need to speak up. Say "Hello." Offer a greeting. He didn't care if all you talked about was the weather, as long as you did not ignore him. Please do not ignore the lonely.

Harry and I shared an incredible love for animals. My wife and I used to volunteer at Lakeland Animal Shelter for years and were so surprised to learn of the shy dog Harry adopted there after the devastating loss of his dog that led to our meeting. Harry told me he picked out his dog Sage because she was the saddest, most down and out, desperately lonely creation of God he found at the shelter. Harry said Sage reminded himself of him. Harry said, "That one, I want to save and fill her lost soul with my love." I teared up when I heard Harry's way of saving a fellow creation. Without the use of his arms, unable to walk and yet

he turned this dog into a wonderful, social dog that went everywhere with him, without a leash. How many people, with full use of their limbs, can say that they accomplished that? This dog, Sage was his companion until the summer of 2013. Harry was never able to hug her or pet her the way we all love our dogs, but she slept next to his bed all those years as his companion and friend with unconditional love, until she died. His service dog Mac Friendly came to him at a time in his life when he was most needed. He was trained by Harry's friend Cindy Skarda to help bring him items, turn on lights and more. Harry would shop for food by knocking items to the floor, since Harry could not grasp anything. Mac Friendly would gently pick up the items and put them in the basket attached to Harry's wheelchair. Mac Friendly was loved by everyone who met him. He opened doors for Harry where people would have looked away, they now engaged in conversation, all due to his dogs. I cannot count how many people have asked me over the years about the man in the wheelchair with the two dogs in tow....

Harry often wished he could rescue more dogs from the shelter. He went to Lakeland Animal Shelter fundraisers and spoke about saving one of our fellow creations from a life of loneliness and sadness. The unconditional love you will receive from a pet you save is a feeling you cannot find anywhere else. They will help you to live a happier, healthier life. They will comfort you when you are sick or down. Please visit Lakeland Animal Shelter, visit their website www.lakelandanimalshelter.org or give them a call 262-723-1000.

When Walworth County was planning an OWI court Harry came to speak up. I listened to Harry's words as they touched many and helped to get the program started in our community. Who could argue with Harry about the necessity for an OWI court? Harry sitting paralyzed in his chair was living proof of the very need. One time Harry and I attended a police meeting for over 100 convicted drunk drivers. When Harry spoke, they all listened in shame.

Over the years Harry attended many events with me. We went to Lakeland Animal Shelter fundraisers, where he had adopted his best friend Sage. We went to church events. We went to schools where I watched him interact with the children and teenagers. Harry spoke to the teens about the dangers of drinking and driving. Most people did not know about the dark times Harry suffered, the times of being alone and feeling useless. I invited my good friend Harry to dinners that a wonderful woman, Carolyn Gable, donated each year at a great restaurant. Carolyn would pay for all the food and Harry would attend with his caregiver, along with four generous supporters of The Time Is Now to Help. These supporters would donate, enabling Harry and I to do more life giving assistance. In addition Carolyn provided 20-30 more dinners to the forgotten poverty stricken living in motels and/or struggling with illness. I tried so hard to lift Harry out of his dark mood and include him in all we did at The Time Is Now to Help but his failing health made it more and more difficult.

Several years ago we came across an angel in disguise, his own neighbor Jolene, who provided the loving, and meticulous care Harry needed. Jolene cooked for Harry, shared her family meals with Harry as a family member. Jolene bathed Harry, dressed Harry, and cleaned his house until it was spotless. Jolene always had nourishing food diced on a tray

that sat between Harry and his computer/television screen. Jolene helped Harry with all aspects of his life...and most of all she loved Harry. As Harry told me, "Sal, Jolene is God's angel sent here to look after me." Thank you Jolene and God Bless you and your family.

The day Harry's beloved Mac Friendly died my family all stopped by to offer our condolences. We entered his house to find Harry in bed with plates of cut up fruit and salad surrounding him, along with his much loved candy. The house was spotless. Harry was well groomed. This was all we ever wanted for our friend, the best quality of life that he could live. This kind, generous woman, Jolene, gave him the care he needed as he went from this life to his next.

Thank you God for the friendship I shared with Harry. I will never forget his sometimes off color humor, his loving heart and his incredible determination to live. God Bless you my friend. Your spirit will live on in all "We" do. When I feel low, remembering your determination will lift me up. When I feel frustrated I will remember your strength.

Please attend the memorial service for Harry Bublitz. It will be held Friday, February 28, 2014 at St. Francis de Sales Church, 148 W. Main Street in Lake Geneva. The vigil begins at 5 p.m. with service to begin at 6 p.m.

My dear readers and friends, we have many other handicapped fellow creations that need our help and compassion. Helping our fellow creations, our Caring and Sharing, doing our good works, is life changing for those we help. God Bless all of you for making "Our" The Time Is Now to Help so special. Together we will continue to remove the many pains of poverty including, hunger, loneliness, fear and homelessness. Together we provide hope, compassion, care, shelter, food, ...all the necessities of daily life, through our Caring and Sharing. God Bless all of "You" for helping. Please help us match the Fox Charities Matching Grant.

Health & Happiness, God Bless Everyone, W.C./Sal

Fox Charities New Year \$25,000 Matching Grant: Thanks to Fox Charities we are helping many get through this terrible winter. Fox Charities has once again graciously stepped up to match your donation dollar for dollar, doubling your help to those in need. Please take advantage of this opportunity to double your Caring & Sharing. Fox Charities recognizes the pain and suffering of our fellow creations that struggle for daily necessities, especially now in this very harsh, cold winter. We need your compassion to make this assistance a reality. Together we can make a big difference in the lives of those suffering in poverty.

Please Help: There are many coming to us in desperation. Our good fellow creations need our compassion. Together we make a big difference. Make checks payable to: The Time Is Now to Help, P.O. Box 1, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. The Time Is Now to Help is a federally recognized 501(c)3 charitable organization licensed in the states of Wisconsin and Illinois. You will receive a tax deductible, itemized thank you receipt showing how your donation provided assistance for the poverty stricken.

A Very Special Thank You: Fox Charities, Richard H. Driehaus Charitable Lead Trust, Dick & Jean Honeyager, Paul Ziegler, Ziegler Charitable Foundation, The Summertime Foundation, Kunes' Country Stateline Superstore, Unilock Chicago, Grunow Family, Clarence & Marilyn Schawk, Mr. & Mrs. Fred Lawton, Peter and Anna Vanderveld, Terri and Rudy Sundberg Family, Gregory L. & Jean Marie Dexter, Martin Group, John Stensland & Family, Our Redeemer Lutheran Ladies Aid, Dr. Thomas Schuetz, John & Violet Hotzfeld, Milton & Carol Ann Ancevic, John Poiron, Beth & Jody Rendall, Catherine Giblin, Ralph & Cynthia Lois, Gerald & Joyce Byers, James & Marilynn Dyer, Julie Ann Muth, Walter & Florence Strumpf, Michol Ann Ford, George & Veronica Kirkpatrick, Charles Carlson, Ernest & Dorothy Winters, Patricia Jankowski, Louise & Clifford Morris, Frank & Ann Huml, Adele Pavis, Bruce & Loretta Adsit, Kathleen Molling, Michael & Kathe Beach, Gwendolyn Quincannon, Sylvester & Virginina Seick, Jeanne Allen, Martha Hren, W.C. Family Resource Center/Food Pantry volunteers, and all the God loving volunteers of all our caring pantries, ALL of you who support The Time Is Now to Help donation boxes, and the businesses that allow our donation boxes. Anyone who would like a Time Is Now donation box in your business, please call (262) 249-7000.

Furniture Donations: Please contact Love, Inc. for all your furniture, clothing and household item donations. Call 262-763-2743 or 262-763-6226 to schedule pick-up. We are no longer affiliated with Chris Ann's Resale Shop.

W.C. Food Pantry Needs Help: The W.C. Food Pantry is desperately in need of 1,000 sq. ft. + donated storage space in Lake Geneva, Elkhorn or Delavan. An overhead door is necessary. It can be heated or unheated. A loading dock would be a huge plus. The W.C. Food Pantry is working hard to provide good food along with other items such as pet food, toiletries and other desperately needed daily necessities. All this requires the space to store these items when donated in large quantities. Please contact Jim Drescher at (262) 745-6018 if you can help the food pantry.

Please visit: www.timeisnowtohelp.org