

View results

Respondent

27

Anonymous

21:33

Time to complete

1. What topic area does your story fall under? If applicable, you may select multiple topics. *

- Housing
- Access to food
- Health Care
- Transportation
- Disabilities/Accessibility
- Family/Friend Caregivers
- Recipient of Care by Family/Friend
- Jobs/Employment
- Home Care Services and Supports
- Assisted Living
- Skilled Nursing Facility
- Paid Care Provider
- Financial Stability
- Insurance
- Other

2. Below, tell us issues you have experienced regarding aging in Minnesota *

My name is Myrna Peterson, a 74-year-old retired educator and quadriplegic because of an auto accident when I was 45 years old on June 21, 1995. I moved to Grand Rapids, MN, 10 years after my accident in 2005. I had been medicated with very strong narcotics because of misdiagnosis causing severe nerve pain. My condition was not healthy, and I was encouraged to go to a treatment center to flush all the narcotics out of my system. After three weeks of rehab with able bodied teenagers and young people in their 20s, I was determined to use my limited mobility to advocate for the rights of differently abled people. I endured 25 surgeries within the first 20 years but then was part of setting a Guinness Book of World Records on May 15, 2015. We had 351 wheelchairs rolling in succession for 3 minutes. Overwhelmed at seeing that many people in wheelchairs at that event, we decided to host meetings in 4 different cities within Itasca County to learn why. We learned that, the 4 top barriers preventing differently abled people from participating in events outside of their home were:

- Lack of accessible transportation
- Poor entrances getting into and within buildings.
- Poor sidewalks, curbs, and trails
- Lack of general public awareness of accessibility needs

I helped to establish a 501(c)3 called Mobility Mania - Accessibility for All to make some positive changes. Our mission is: To increase accessibility awareness to make Itasca County the showcase of accessibility in Minnesota and to raise finances for local accessibility needs.

Mobility Mania is fortunate to have the support of the City of Grand Rapids in our mission. The City Council unanimously supports that all new commercial construction or renovation consider having an accessibility collaboration with Mobility Mania to ensure their project is not only ADA code compliant but is as accessible as it can be. We have collaborated with many local and state agencies to meet the needs of our aging an differently abled citizens.

I am serving my second four-year term on the MN Governor’s Advisory Council on Connected and Automated Vehicles, exploring driverless vehicles and buses. Grand Rapids is a pilot city for this new technology. Three of our five self-driving vans are ADA compliant and are part of goMARTI, Minnesota’s Autonomous Rural Transit Initiative, an 18-month pilot project. We recently received an ATTAIN federal grant for \$9.2 million to expand the goMARTI project using electric vehicle4s that are ADA compliant for an additional three years. Aging and differently abled friends use this service for better quality of life activities.

I am also currently serving my second three-year term on the Minnesota Council on Disability. I represent people within DEEDS Region 3 by providing resources available at the state level and share their concerns as they fit into our legislative efforts.This is a great way to stay connected with people who have a variety of abilities and ages.

Locally, I am honored to be the Chair of the Reif Performing Arts Council, serve on the MacRostie Art Center Board and the Grand Rapids Arts and Culture Commission. I have a passion for getting differently abled people involved in visual and performing arts in our community. I feel strongly that everyone deserves a quality of life, regardless of their age or ability. Art expression can be a creative way of building confidence and self-worth. It also is great at bringing community awareness and appreciation for these unique artists.

Mobility Mania started a monthly Support Group for differently abled people and their caregivers. We have dinner together and then meet separately to share common concerns and resources with each other. We are all better together, and the diversity of abilities and age increases the quality of life and acceptance of others in our community. My personal mission is that ‘Yesterday is gone and none of us are promised tomorrow. We all need to make the most of today!’

3. Please enter your zip code. *

55744

4. Optional - Please provide your name and address

Myrna Peterson