

# DAMI News

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

NOVEMBER 29, 2004

## DAMI Board

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Peter Moodie  
Co-Chair

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Treasurer

Joanne Becklund  
Secretary

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Beth Gendler

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Ron Cottone  
Exec. Dir.

This issue of DAMI News is distributed with the generous help of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

## Camping and Disability

“Sending my child to camp will be the best thing for her, but I worry that if I mention anything about her disability on the registration form, she may be turned away.” This fear still exists among parents of children with disabilities. It

*“If I mention special needs on the camp registration form, will my child be turned away?”*

was not so long ago that summer camping programs were not inclusive and accessible to children with disabilities. Fortunately this

situation is changing.

This spring and summer, DAMI worked closely with the Camps, Conferences and Retreats (CCR) office of the Minnesota Annual Conference, United Methodist Church to ensure that campers with disabilities had access to camping programs. There are nine UMC camps in Minnesota, and each one is accessible and inclusive of campers with disabilities. This commitment to access begins with the camp booklet which states its policy of inclusion of campers with disabilities on the page facing the registration form. It says that the CCR “is working toward full inclusion of



WITH IMAGINATION, MOST CAMP SITES CAN BE ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE.

children, youth and adults with disabilities in camps it sponsors.” Saying “full inclusion” does not mean “separate but equal” access but means full access and full integration of all persons into camping facilities and programs. (cont. p. 2)

## Introducing the DAMI Board

The DAMI Board of Directors has a new look. Two members from the previous board are continuing to serve, and five other new members have joined since

the annual meeting in May. Peter Moodie and Joanne Becklund are continuing to serve from the previous board. Our new members are Beth Gendler, Bob Free-

man, David Moseman, Lois, Swope and Mary Jean Babcock. The Board elected Moodie as Chair, Becklund as Secretary and Moseman as Treasurer. p.2

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# Camping and Disability

When the CCR receives an application for camp, it is sent to DAMI if special needs are noted on it. DAMI then calls the parents of the camper to learn more about the camper's special needs. If there is a diagnosis of ADHD, diabetes, mental illness or some other condition, it is noted. DAMI gathers other helpful information such as the medications the camper takes and the interactive strategies parents use at home that work well when dealing with their child.

Based on the information gathered, DAMI will determine if the camper needs an *integration specialist*, a trained person assigned to help the camper integrate fully into the camping program activities. The integration specialist, a kind of camper's buddy, helps the camper integrate fully into activities and helps other campers interact appropri-

ately with the camper.

The information DAMI gathers in the parent interview is passed back to the CCR. The CCR passes this information to the Camp Director and Camp Dean so that they can help create an inclusive camping experience for the camper. If needed, the Integration Specialist Coordinator assigns an integration specialist to the camper. Integration Specialists know how to work with campers in such a way as not to make their relationship with the camper conspicuous to other campers.

In addition to processing application forms, DAMI delivers disability awareness training to camp counselors before they begin their counseling assignments. This training ensures that all camp counselors are aware of ways to make camp inclusive of everyone. During the summer camping

season, DAMI is available to Camp Directors, Camp Deans and Camp Counselors to give advice and guidance on any question that arises regarding the inclusion of campers with disabilities.

After the summer camping season ends, DAMI meets with CCR staff to identify ways to improve the assessment and assignment process described above. The CCR also conducts inclusive camps, conferences and retreats during the fall, winter and spring. DAMI supports the CCR to help it ensure that participants with disabilities are included fully in these events.

DAMI also offers its inclusive camping experience to the camping programs of other denominations and faiths.

## TIPS

### Hidden Disabilities

1. Become aware of the presence of hidden disabilities through education and training.
2. Support those learning to live with a hidden disability with affirmation and encouragement.
3. Be watchful and mindful of special needs such as the need to avoid wheat.
4. Start a parish nurse program to help the congregation feel safe to reveal its hidden disabilities.

### DAMI NEWS

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DAMI News is published by  
Disability Awareness  
Ministries, Inc.

612-230-DAMI (3264)  
DAMI is an independent  
501(c)3 non-profit, founded  
in 1991, whose mission is  
to remove barriers in faith  
communities to people with  
disabilities through educa-  
tion and training.

# Introducing the DAMI Board

Our goal at DAMI has been to create a board that is both ecumenical and interfaith in its composition. Our new board membership moves closer to that goal. Of our seven members, three are United Methodist, one is Presbyterian, one is Catholic, one is Christian Evangelical and one is Jewish. Board members

either live with a disability themselves, live with a family member who has a disability or work with people who live with disabilities.

Peter Moodie, board co-chair, led the board in a strategy session in which we took an inventory of board knowledge and abilities. After reviewing and compiling skills

and experience, we discovered we still need to recruit board members who know fund raising, financial management, volunteer coordination. If you have any of these skills and would like to serve on the DAMI board or know of someone who does, please contact Ron Cottone at the DAMI office: 612-230-3264.

*Religious  
Disability  
Resources*

If you need to contact a religious resource organization that offers assistance to persons with disabilities, contact DAMI, and we may be able to provide you with the most current addresses and phone numbers. Because DAMI is an ecumenical, inter-faith agency, we keep documentation on disability resources in many denominations and religious faiths. The internet is also a great place to find disability resource information. For example, you can print out a list of religious disability resources at the following website:  
<http://gbgm-umc.org/disc/rel-orgs.stm>  
 (include the dashes in the web address)  
 Also, type "religious disability resources" into any search engine.

## *Barriers in God's House*

The topic of removing barriers came up in a recent discussion. A parishoner was telling me about the many improvements her congregation had made to their building to make it more accessible. An elevator and ramps had been installed along with other features in washrooms and hallways that improve access to people with mobility impairments. The list of remodeling improvements was

impressive. It seemed that anyone could get into the building and use its facilities.

Wondering if other areas were accessible, I asked if they made large print bulletins available, if hearing assistance devices were offered and if alternatives to wheat products were available for communion or community dinners. None of these things had been considered. Were people with disabilities inten-

tionally invited to participate in programs and serve on committees? No, they were not. Realizing the job was not finished, the parishoner replied that they had more work still to do.

Barriers to access occur in at least three forms: architectural, communicational and attitudinal. Once we have made our building physically accessible, we need to ensure that those who enter can communi-

## *Secretary as Change Agent*

On October 11th DAMI attended the annual meeting of P A U M C S (Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries). We presented a workshop on practical things a church secretary can

do to encourage inclusion in communities of faith. For example, when a group or committee requests to schedule a room for a meeting, ask if anyone attending has a disability. If so, you can make more inclusive decisions regarding

location, lighting, furniture, amplifying equipment, room temperature, etc. For Sunday worship you can always run a few large print bulletins for the ushers to distribute. The point is to create inclusive events by being

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U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

Disability Awareness Ministries, Inc.  
122 West Franklin Avenue, Room # 7  
Minneapolis, MN 55404-2435

## DAMI NEWS

### DONATIONS

With 2004 coming to a close, you may be thinking of making a year-end gift. One of DAMI's major sources of support is from individuals. In fact, without individual contributions, DAMI could not survive.

The work of raising awareness about disabilities urgently needs your support. We appreciate your prayers and gifts.

DAMI is a membership non-profit organization. The bylaws grant voting privileges at the Annual Meeting to persons who join DAMI and whose total gifts equal or exceed \$25 or 10 hours of volunteer service in a calendar year. (Gifts of less than \$25 are still welcome!)

#### Contribution Structure

- \$25 Friend
- \$50 Supporter
- \$100 Advocate
- \$500 Partner
- \$1000 Sustainer
- \$5000 Benefactor

## DAMI Yearly Memberships

### JOIN DAMI TODAY !!!

**Yes ! Sign me up for a one-year membership in DAMI !!!**

New Member     Renewing     Upgrade

My check is enclosed for \$\_\_\_\_\_ payable to DAMI

NAME

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone/Email