

MY DISABILITY...

An Incredible Journey

I live with a disability and it is called cerebral palsy. In fact, I would contend that we all do! It is my privilege to share and dialogue with you and your community concerning the important areas of:

DISCRIMINATION:

I was in a large city on business. That night I was to stay at a motel, so I dropped my bags off there in the forenoon. At 7:00 p.m. I returned to the motel. They were busy, so I waited in line. When my turn came, the clerk asked me for my ID and I gave her what I had. She then proceeded to say that I could not stay there and asked me to leave. The question is: was it because she didn't like my ID or was it that she did not want to deal with me due to my disability?

GETTING AN EDUCATION:

Because of my disability, our school district thought I should be in "special education". When I graduated from high school I wanted to go on to college. Due to my enrollment in "special education", the diploma I received was not recognized by the State. I had to fight for my right to get into college. Today I hold a Bachelor of Science in Vocational Rehabilitation from the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

MISDIAGNOSIS:

I was misdiagnosed to have an IQ in the 60's at a young age. As I got older I discovered that a mistake had been made. My dreams and hopes were to be "normal" like my friends and that someday I will be. Today is the day I choose to be "normal". I was misdiagnosed, but life goes on!

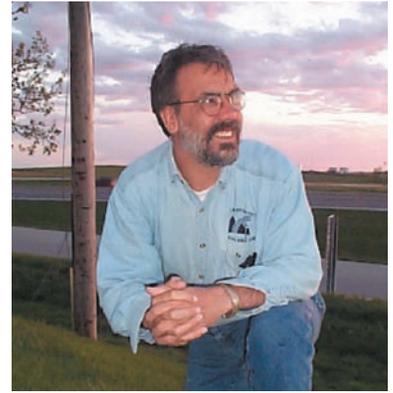
ENDORSEMENTS:

"Your presentation to the students enrolled in our teacher education program at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire was enthusiastically received. I am certain that the knowledge, understanding, and passion that characterize your presentation will enhance their understanding of the role of families and that of their sons and daughters with disabilities in education. Your personal story and first hand knowledge of law and best practice paralleled our studies in family involvement. We look forward to the opportunity to have you back on our campus. If there is anything that we can do to support your important work, do not hesitate to ask. On behalf of our students, our faculty and the School of Education I sincerely thank you for your contribution to our teacher education programs."

– DAVID J. FRANKS, PH.D.,
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF
WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

"Ben has been speaking to the UW-Stout Inclusion Students With Exceptional Educational Needs" classes every semester for the past eight years; he uses humor, personal experience and a vast store of knowledge on inclusion to help future educators gain a personal understanding of the importance of inclusion in the lives of those with disabilities."

– LYNN LA VENTURE
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT



BEN D. ANDERSON

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I took a class of graduate students in mental health counseling to see Ben speak during disability awareness week on campus. Their words, shared in weekly reflection journals, say best the impact Ben can have on a group:

"Hearing Ben Anderson speak was truly inspirational:... "Eloquent--he had such a positive and high-spirited attitude"... "I cannot imagine anyone who hears Ben's story to not leave with a smile and a new sense of determination toward life...I know I did" These are but a few of the overwhelming positive reflections shared by students after attending a one hour talk by Ben. He truly captivated our hearts and minds with his message.

– JOHN ACHTER, PH.D., DIRECTOR
COUNSELING CENTER,
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT