Deshae Lott Ministries Inc

Meet the Recipients of the 2012 CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Outreach Program

Quality of Life Grants

Diana Mass, 2012 Quality-of-Life Grant Recipient

Diana Mass

Recipient of a $350 CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Outreach Program Quality of Life Grant

Diana is a repeat recipient of our Quality of Life Grant. Paralyzed in an accident in 1992, she is a quadriplegic, and after years of rehabilitation she made a decision in 2008 to go to school, choosing "to make use of my eyes and my mind and my voice, the things I still have control over." Her background was in design and construction, in which she had worked as a consultant for 20 years. After relearning to use a computer with a HeadMouse, a laser camera and a reflective dot stuck to her forehead, she went on to take a Computer Aided Design and Drafting class. Those initial drafting classes led to more sophisticated training in the design and building of houses from the ground up using Building Image Management (BIM) software. She then moved on to civil drafting, learning how to design subdivisions and water drainage systems. She also studied 3D Industrial Design and Geographical Information Systems, or computerized mapmaking.

In the winter of 2011, she graduated at age 60, earned her certification in Architectural, Mechanical and Civil drafting. Her goal now is to use her skills to help baby boomers and disabled people with redesigned spaces that will accommodate needs that change with their life circumstances. Currently, she works as a volunteer at an Acute Rehab Center, helping people who have experienced heart attacks, strokes, and spinal cord injuries. Her experience helps her to establish credibility and fellowship with the patients, who feel more comfortable expressing their concerns about their drastically changed circumstances. She has also begun speaking in the State Legislature as a delegate for those with disabilities.

In recent months, she has had increasing difficulties meeting her financial obligations, and had to cut back her caregiver's hours. She has sought additional grant funding to help in this regard and improve the overall quality of her life.

Diana says it best in her own words: "These past few years have taught me that it is never too late to reinvent yourself, no matter what your situation may be. I believe that each day is a gift, and to be able to use that gift to help others is my goal."

Ida Barkley Tranks

Recipient of a $500 CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Outreach Program Quality of Life Grant

Ida Tranks of Charlotte, North Carolina has Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), a progressive disorder resulting in difficulty with balance, muscle spasms, weakness and stiffness. Other symptoms include facial involvement that can cause inarticulate speech as well as difficulty swallowing and breathing. She needs assistance with all aspects of daily life except for reading, writing, speaking, seeing, and hearing.

She lives with her 15-year-old grandson, whom she has raised from infancy. They have no other family members to provide them with assistance, and she has applied for the grant to help with hiring a female caregiver to help with bathing and dressing who can give her some dignity and privacy.

Melissa K. Caffey

Recipient of a Second $500 Quality-of-Life Grant

The CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Outreach Program Selection Committee is pleased to award a second $500 Quality of Life Grant to Melissa K. Caffey of Springfield, Missouri. Melissa was diagnosed with the Limb-Girdle Muscular Dystrophy in 1996. She can no longer stand and uses a power wheelchair at all times. She feels that the progression of her disease has allowed her to become more creative in every aspect of her life, and "I look forward to using my creativity to make my life and the lives of others better. I believe this is my purpose in life."

Melissa needs assistance with all aspects of self-care except seeing and hearing. These include mobility, personal grooming and hygiene, meal planning, shopping and preparation; breathing, clearing secretions, respiratory treatments and other essential medical procedures; transportation, housekeeping and communication (writing, typing, speaking). She used last year's grant to buy personal supplies essential to daily living that are not covered by any form of government assistance. Since the first time she applied for the grant, her personal medical needs with regard to hygiene have increased and with them the need for such supplies. Additionally, her doctor has suggested that a membership in the hospital's fitness center, at $505 for the year, would give her the benefit of using the therapy pool as often as she likes. This would be a much more cost-effective way for her to reap the benefits of pool therapy, as neither pool therapy nor physical therapy are covered by her insurance.

John C. (Jay) Ruckelshaus IV

Recipient of a Second $500 CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Outreach Program Quality-of-Life Grant

We are pleased to award a second $500 Quality-of-Life Grant to Jay Ruckelshaus. John Christian Ruckelshaus IV accepted his first CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Quality-of-Life grant last year. He was an 18-year-old graduate of Cathedral High in Carmel, Indiana, co-valedictorian of his class and a star athlete, scholar and musician. He had accepted a full ride scholarship to Duke University, having turned down offers from Harvard, Yale and Indiana University. Then, one night that summer, he dove into a reservoir that turned out to be only four feet deep. He never lost consciousness, but lost feeling immediately. He had broken his neck between the C4 and C5 vertebrae, lost feeling from the shoulders down, and lost the ability to breathe on his own. He was told he was not likely to get back any of his physical capabilities, but he and his mother have both been very dedicated to his recovery. They went to the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, which specializes in spinal cord injuries First he learned to breathe again and was able to get off the vent, and then he relearned how to speak despite the hole in his trachea. He then regained some arm movement, and by mid-October, he could lift a fork to his mouth and pet the clinic's kitten, and had learned to use a paintbrush and a joystick.

After over a year of rehabilitation at the Shepard Center, Jay started his freshman year at Duke. According to his application, he is stabilized and enjoying his academic opportunities. Jay uses a manual wheelchair that needs electrically assisted wheels, which ATG Rehab of Chicago will provide for $4115. An itemized invoice was included with his application, and the grant will go directly to ATG for that purpose.

Jay's faith is very strong and he and his mother are both very hopeful. Jay is in an experimental program through the Shepard Center and does not expect to be in a wheelchair the rest of his life. His mother has given up her real estate career in order to be with him in Atlanta, and now at Duke, to monitor his health care.

William Spencer

Recipient of a $350 CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Quality-of-Life Grant

William has ALS . He needs assistance in all aspects of daily living except seeing and hearing. He has a local treating physician in Orlando, Dr. Jan Parillo, and he also travels to Charlotte, NC for treatment. He has had to quit working, and his need for more consistent assistance has increased.

William has a son in college for whom he had originally applied for a CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Outreach Scholarship. His son was not eligible, since he was neither a graduate student nor disabled himself, but we encouraged William at the time to apply for a grant in his own right, and we suggested some financial aid resources available for the children of disabled parents.

William will apply the grant funds to his travel expenses .

Emily Haynes

Recipient of a $500 CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Quality-of-Life Grant

Emily Haynes of Charleston, West Virginia suffers from Myasthenia Gravis, a condition characterized by fluctuating muscle weakness, particularly affecting the muscles that control her eyes, chewing, swallowing and the use of her limbs. Prior to her diagnosis at age 32 in October of 2005, she was a healthy and productive businesswoman who worked over forty hours a week and enjoyed snowboarding and other board sports. The steady deterioration of her condition has been deeply frustrating, and she has been dealing with the added complication of the onset of non-epileptic seizures.

Her husband Jeffery has worked at part-time jobs since finishing school in December 2011, but the level of assistance that Emily requires at home combined with the frustrations they've encountered in applying for assistance has required Jeffery to stay home as her primary caregiver, and the two of them to live on her Social Security Disability of only $946 per month.

Their home is currently in need of a number of modifications to improve accessibility for Emily, including new exterior stairs and a grab bar in the shower. Because of the time she has to spend sitting, more comfortable furniture and bedding would also be very beneficial to Emily. She and Jeffery plan to put the grant money toward the needed modifications to their home.