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Abstract

This is a brief story by Leslie Manny who describes her loneliness and difficulty in meeting people because of her disability. She then tells of her citizen advocate and what that person has meant in her life. **Keyword: Advocacy**

Leslie's Story

I am Leslie and I have difficulty getting out because I use a wheelchair. This has made it very hard for me to make many friends. Most of my friends have been at the place I work. I can only see my friends when I am at work. Sometimes at weekends I have felt very lonely. I have wished I could bring some of my friends home for the weekends. We could have talked, laughed, cried and had fun.

This made me wish I could get out of my wheelchair and visit my friends.

There were many times I wondered what it was like to have a good friend. I wanted to be able to talk about personal things to someone who treated me as equal - a friend. Also I wanted to be able to listen and help my friend. There would be warmth of knowing someone else cared for me and I cared for her.

About ten months ago Fiona and Anne from Citizen Advocacy arranged for me to meet Jo at the Botanical Gardens. When I heard about this I felt very excited and a little nervous. Before I met Jo I thought a lot about what Jo would be like and would I like her and would she like me.

When I did meet Jo I wanted to say something but it just went away. I wanted to say to her we wouldn't be able to go places the wheelchair didn't fit. Jo didn't seem to be worried at all.

In our first meeting I thought Jo was great. She talked about her work and looked at me and smiled. It seemed to me that Jo would be a lot of fun to be with. At the end of our first meeting I wanted to see Jo again. This was the beginning of our friendship. Knowing Jo has helped me to be a more independent person. I feel more confident in myself and my ideas knowing Jo is there to encourage me when I need her. Inside me there is a warm and happy feeling.

Jo takes me lots of places I would not have got to before. I go to indoor cricket and watch Jo playing. The game is exciting and sometimes Jo's team wins. At the cricket I have met lots of other people. These people help me to feel good about myself. The movies are another place Jo and I go and enjoy ourselves.

We also like to talk and share things. I like to phone Jo and talk to her about my day and her day.

I have been able to have Jo to my place for dinner and I sometimes have dinner at Jo's place. Having a friend like Jo is very important to me. My life has been happier and I now have more fun. A friend like Jo is JUST TERRIFIC.

Leslie Manny - Dec. '88