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A new level of mobility

Des Plaines Community Foundation volunteers, Jen School students build ramp for disabled resident

Submitted by Aimee L. DeBat

Steven Moraitis is going to be more mobile in 2021 thanks to the Des Plaines Community Foundation and volunteer Paul Bartholomae, also known as “Ramp Man.”

Moraitis’ life changed three years ago as he was driving through the city of Chicago. According to Beth Ulloa, Moraitis’ mother, he got caught in crossfire between police and gangs. Moraitis was shot in the head and was badly injured. The stray bullet entered behind his left ear.

He survived and has been undergoing rehab. He is currently using a motorized wheelchair to go to doctor appointments.

But getting him in and out of the house proved challenging.

“Retired teacher Paul Bartholomae, who is known to the Des Plaines Community Foundation as the ‘Ramp Man’ in Des Plaines, was there as usual offering his ramp-building expertise,” said Rosemary Argus, executive director of the Des Plaines Community Foundation.

“The Ramp Program at the Des Plaines Community Foundation is a great asset for the community and for the students who are eager to learn construction skills,” said Argus. For the past 25 years, Bartholomae has volunteered his services, working closely with the Des Plaines Community Foundation and building-trade students to assemble metal and wood wheelchair ramps in Des Plaines.

He has been retired for the past four and a half years from Maine West High School, but now works with the students at Jen School.

“When Steven came home from the rehab facility, I called the community outreach at the city of Des Plaines and spoke with Kathy Puetz, community social worker at the Health and Human Services office,” said Ulloa. “That was how it began.”

The city’s Department of Health and Human Services forwards requests for wheelchair ramps to Argus and the



Recently completed through a special ramp program, the Des Plaines Community Foundation, city of Des Plaines Health and Human Services office, volunteer Paul Bartholomae and Jen School students/staff help the community. This ramp was located four blocks from the first aluminum ramp ever built by the Des Community Foundation 25 years ago. This is the 56th ramp built by the foundation.

Des Plaines Community Foundation, which relays them to Bartholomae.

“What makes the program so successful is the cooperation among the students,” said Bartholomae, a 35-year veteran instructor from Maine West High School.

Ulloa is also disabled and has trouble navigating the stairs of her Des Plaines home of nine years. She is caring for her son after the accident. Steven also has two small children that frequently visit their father, she said.

“Ulloa and son were using two expandable scaffolding planks to get Steven in his wheelchair to his doctor appointments,” Argus said. “It’s a wonder they did not have an accident.”

Paul’s son, Sean Bartholomae, also assisted with the installation of Steven’s ramp.

“My son was the job coach for some of my older projects when we had after-school grants to build both metal and

wood ramps and sheds,” said Bartholomae.

“Sean comes to the job site and takes over and gets the job done,” said Bartholomae. “He rescues me when I need to be rescued. I work ahead, so when he comes, he can knock it out in a day.”

“We saved about \$1,800 by using leftover parts from other ramps built, which were returned when they were no longer needed,” said Bartholomae. “My daughters, Bridget and Heather, as well as my grandchildren Miles and Cloe, helped transport the 8-foot ramp and the 5-by-5-foot platform we were able to use for the second time.”

Ironically, this ramp was about four blocks away from the first ramp built 25 years ago. This is the 56th ramp the Des Plaines Community Foundation has built with the help of building-trade students.

Jen School students worked on the pre-assembly of the metal ramp parts at the

warehouse at Maryville. The students worked for two days assembling the ramp so it was ready to put together on-site.

“The plan has been to divvy up tasks and bring different strengths to the table. And they work — just like a real-life crew,” said Bartholomae. “It is really a hands-on experience for some of these students, and the experience can turn into a future career.”

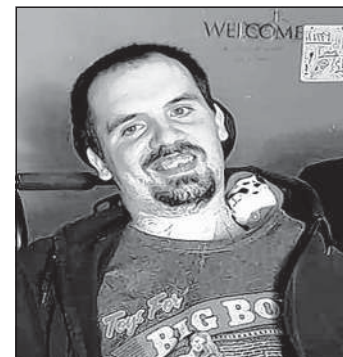
It can take anywhere from six weeks for an aluminum ramp and three months to build a wooden ramp, depending on the size.

“It means the world to me to be able to get my son in and out of the house safely — like if there was a fire or an emergency,” said Ulloa. “Especially now with his new motorized wheelchair that weighs roughly 344 pounds, I am so thankful to everyone that helped make this ramp possible. It really means a lot to me and my family.”

“The Des Plaines Community Foundation appreciates



Sean Bartholomae assists with the installation of Steven Moraitis' ramp. Sean was the “job coach” for some of the grant projects his father, Paul Bartholomae, worked on with students at Maine West High School to build both metal and wood ramps and sheds.



Steven Moraitis is now able to go to doctor appointments using a motorized wheelchair and new metal ramp donated by the Des Plaines Community Foundation and built by volunteer Paul Bartholomae and Jen School students and staff.

Paul Bartholomae, and sincerely thanks him for his work with the Jen School students in Des Plaines,” said Argus.

The supplies for the ramp totaled more than \$6,000, which was donated by the Des Plaines Community Foundation.

“The ramps are the most important thing we do for the Des Plaines residents in need,” said Bartholomae. “It becomes a problem when the elderly or disabled can’t get out of their homes to get to

doctor.”

Bartholomae will continue to volunteer his time with Jen School students. Many of them have preferential learning styles like hands-on and visual learning. These alternative learning styles help expose the students to experiential learning.

“The wheelchair ramps allow folks to go to the park or doctors’ appointments,” said Argus. “The building trades students have touched the lives of residents, young and old, with various challenges.”

Some of the Des Plaines Community Foundation’s programs include Neighbors Helping Neighbors Program Committee; Healthy Community/Healthy Youth Program Committee; Intergenerational Program Committee, and Seasons of Service program Committee.

The foundation is 100% volunteer. The Des Plaines Community Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization and funds are obtained from individuals, businesses and corporate tax-deductible contributions, as well as from other foundations.

For information, call Rosemary Argus at (847) 525-5566 or visit www.desplainescommunityfoundation.org.

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Mother of the bride isn't thrilled about wedding

Adapted from an online discussion.

Q: I’m engaged and planning our wedding, but my mom is very down on big weddings. She thinks they’re a waste of time and especially money.

My fiancé and I are paying for just about everything, but each set of parents has given us about \$2,000. We’ve expressed enormous gratitude for that, and it wasn’t something we asked for.

In spite of giving us the money, my mom is constantly telling me we should just elope now and get started on our family right away. She hates weddings, but is very interested in grandchildren.

I’ve talked to her about how important a nice wedding is to us and how much I would



Carolyn Hax

appreciate her support. She always promises to do better and to at least be polite about it, and then the next day she’s back on the

anti-wedding train.

Because of this, I wasn’t going to have her come when I try on dresses next month, since all she has to say about them is what a waste of money they are and how ridiculous I am for getting one.

My future mother-in-law is thrilled for us and is very excited about my gown, so I was going to invite her and my sister to come with me.

My sister is telling me this is an important moment for a mother and daughter, and our mom feels left out and is upset that my future mother-in-law is coming with me instead of her.

I’m sure she feels left out, but I know she’s not interested in seeing me try on wedding gowns. My sister says if I don’t have our mom there, I’ll regret it forever.

My fiancé says I should just ask her since she’ll probably say no, but I think it’s more likely that she’ll show up and try to talk me out of a big white dress or be critical the whole day. What would you do if you were me?

— Engaged

A: When this pandemic is behind us, I think we should all have enormous weddings, even if we aren’t getting

married.

As for your mom, I’m thinking utter bluntness: “Mom, I’d love to have you come dress shopping. But if you breathe one word of wasted money or eloping, so help me, I will send you home. If you need time to think, then take it and let me know.”

Plus, it’ll probably be the closest any of us gets to one of those great movie scenes where the underdog finds her snarl.

If your mother agrees to your terms for being there and then acts up anyway, calmly stop trying things on until she either apologizes or leaves.

Re: Weddings:

Listen, I love weddings and traditions as much as the next gal, but if your mom doesn’t

come dress shopping, you’ll “regret it forever”? Methinks you and your sis may be putting a little too much importance on really, really mundane activities just because they’re tangentially related to your wedding.

— Anonymous

A: Right, yes, I missed that. Thank you.

And now that I’m here: “very interested in grandchildren”? How utterly not her business. Best to get those boundaries up before raising the tent.

• *Email Carolyn at tellme@washpost.com, follow her on Facebook at www.facebook.com/carolyn.hax or chat with her online at noon Eastern time each Friday at www.washingtonpost.com.*

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Movie guide

Four stars: superior. Three: good. Two: average. One: poor. D (drugs), L (language), N (nudity), S (sexual content), V (violence). Ratings by Film Critic Dann Gire, unless noted.

Picks

“**Black Bear**” — Aubrey Plaza captivates in a moody, purposefully disorienting meta thriller about moviemaking, creativity and ego. On demand. Reviewed by Associated Press. (R) D, L, N, S. 104 minutes. ★★

“**Collective**” — Journalists look into the aftermath of a Bucharest nightclub fire in a piercing documentary about corruption in Romania. On demand. In Romanian with subtitles. Reviewed by Washington Post. (NR) V. 109 minutes. ★★½

“**The Dissident**” — Terrifying details and wrenching revelations make Bryan Fogel’s gripping documentary about the brutal murder of Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi essential viewing. On demand. Reviewed by Associated Press. (PG-13) L. 117 minutes. ★★½

“**Happiest Season**” — Starring Kristen Stewart and Mackenzie Davis, this modern romantic comedy about wanting your family’s acceptance while being true to yourself is refreshing and happily watchable. On Hulu. Reviewed by Associated Press. (PG-13) L. 102 minutes. ★★

“**Herself**” — A battered wife (Clare Dunne) in

Dublin leaves her abusive husband and sets out to create a home for her daughters with a build-it-yourself house kit in Phyllida Lloyd’s drama. On Amazon Prime. (R) L, V. 87 minutes. ★★

“**The Life Ahead**” — Sophia Loren is magnificent as a former prostitute and wounded soul who finally lets her guard down with a challenging 12-year-old from Senegal. On Netflix. In Italian with subtitles. Reviewed by Washington Post. (PG-13) D, L, S. 94 minutes. ★★

“**Locked Down**” — Chiwetel Ejiofor and Anne Hathaway make a charming pair as a strained couple stuck at home together during the early months of the pandemic in a romantic comedy/ heist movie. Reviewed by Associated Press. On HBO Max. R, D, L. 118 minutes. ★★

“**Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom**” — Viola Davis and Chadwick Boseman — in his final and perhaps finest performance — offer a master class in acting as clashing musicians in early 20th-century America. On Netflix. Reviewed by Associated Press. (R) L, S. V. 94 minutes. ★★

“**Mank**” — Gary Oldman embodies Herman Mankiewicz in all of early Hollywood’s greatness and tragedy in David Fincher’s look at the man who wrote “Citizen Kane.” On Netflix. Reviewed by Associated Press. (R) L, 132 minutes. ★★

“**The Midnight Sky**” — George Clooney directs and stars in this poetic tale of an astrophy-

cist trying to warn a spaceship crew of destruction on Earth. On Netflix. Reviewed by Associated Press. (PG-13) L, V. 118 minutes. ★★

“**MLK/FBI**” — Sam Pollard’s engrossing documentary paints a frightening portrait of how FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover used wiretaps, blackmail and informers to target Martin Luther King. On demand. Reviewed by Associated Press. (NR) 102 minutes. ★★

“**News of the World**” — A Civil War veteran (Tom Hanks) embarks on a journey with a feral orphan (Helena Zengel) in Paul Greengrass’ visually stunning film about forgiveness and moving past trauma. Reviewed by Associated Press. (PG-13) L, V. 118 minutes. ★★

“**One Night in Miami**” — Regina King’s drama has the perfect ensemble in Kingsley Ben-Adir, Leslie Odom Jr., Aldis Hodge and Eli Goree, acting out what might have happened during a gathering of Malcolm X, Sam Cooke, Jim Brown and Cassius Clay. On Amazon Prime Video. Reviewed by Washington Post. (R) L, N, S. 126 minutes. ★★

“**Pieces of a Woman**” — Vanessa Kirby offers an unforgettable vulnerable performance as a woman whose home birth ends in tragedy in this harrowing drama. On Netflix. Reviewed by Associated Press. (R) D, L, N, S. 126 minutes. ★★

“**The Prom**” — Ryan Murphy’s campy valentine to musical theater — inspired by a gay teen banned from her prom — dazzles with splashy numbers and an A-list cast. On Netflix. Reviewed by Washington Post. (PG-13) L, S. 132 minutes. ★★

“**Promising Young Woman**” — Carey

Mulligan’s immersive portrait of a deeply wounded young woman who targets male predators at bars propels Emerald Fennell’s daring thriller into the realm of blistering social commentary. On demand. (R) D, L, S, V. 113 minutes. ★★½

“**Sound of Metal**” — Riz Ahmed shines as a punk-metal drummer whose life is upended when he loses his hearing. On Amazon Prime. Reviewed by Washington Post. (R) L, N. 130 minutes. ★★

“**Synchronic**” — Paramedics (Anthony Mackie and Jamie Dornan) link a series of injuries and deaths to a drug with time-travel side effects in a thriller that celebrates the power of friendship. On demand. (R) D, L, V. 100 minutes. ★★

“**Tenet**” — John David Washington stars as a CIA agent caught in a “time stie” that inverts chronology in Christopher Nolan’s anxiously awaited sci-fi thriller. On demand. (PG-13) V. 151 minutes. ★★

“**The White Tiger**” — Adarsh Gourav gives a charismatic performance as a chauffeur in this dynamic portrait of India and the caste system that divides it. On Netflix. Reviewed by Associated Press. (R) L, S, V. 125 minutes. ★★

Passables

“**Greenland**” — An engineer (Gerard Butler) tries to get his estranged wife and son to safety as a comet threatens to wipe out life on earth. On demand. (PG-13) L, V. 119 minutes. ★★

“**Im Your Woman**” — Rachel Brosnahan stars as a gangster’s wife who is plunged into a loosely

connected underworld in Julia Hart’s ’70s-set crime drama. On Amazon Prime. Reviewed by Associated Press. (R) L, V. 120 minutes. ★★½

“**Let Him Go**” — Diane Lane and Kevin Costner play grandparents trying to rescue their grandson from his stepfather’s ruthless family. On demand. (R) L, V. 113 minutes. ★★½

“**Let Them All Talk**” — A self-absorbed author (Meryl Streep) sails from the U.S. to England with her nephew and two friends in Steven Soderbergh’s latest. Reviewed by Washington Post. On HBO Max. (R) L. 113 minutes. ★★½

“**No Man’s Land**” — A young man (Jake Allyn) flees his Texas ranch after killing a Mexican boy in an uneven independent thriller. With George Lopez, On demand. Reviewed by Associated Press. (PG-13) L, V. 114 minutes. ★★

“**Soul**” — A band teacher (voiced by Jamie Foxx) winds up in the Great Before and mentors a difficult soul (Tina Fey) in Pixar’s visually dazzling but frustrating latest. On Disney+. Reviewed by Washington Post. (PG). 100 minutes. ★★½

“**Superintelligence**” — An AI superintelligence puts average Carol (Plainfield’s Melissa McCarthy) to a three-day test to decide whether humanity is worth saving. On HBO Max. Reviewed by Associated Press. (PG) L. 105 minutes. ★★

“**Sylvie’s Love**” — Tessa Thompson and Nnamdi Asomugha share an undeniable chemistry as lovers in Eugene Ashe’s ode to classic melodrama. On Amazon Prime. Reviewed by Associated Press. (PG-13) S. 114 minutes. ★★½