

# New Horizons Un-Limited

Serving Our Community Members with Disabilities Since 1994

## Accessible Cabin Dedication Wisconsin State Parks



Mirror Lake State Park Accessible Cabin - 1991

In 1990, Arthur Miller, founder of New Horizons Un-Limited, became involved with the design of the first accessible cabin for people with disabilities for the Wisconsin State Parks at Mirror Lake State Park campground in the Wisconsin Dells area. Looking back to this time, he remembers, "We believed this was only the beginning and that five more should be built throughout the state." Constructed by the Telephone Pioneers of America, volunteers for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, this first project became the road map for future cabins. The cabin was built through the contributions of design, materials, furnishings, and volunteer labor provided by the Pioneers, the local Friends of State parks group and other community volunteers.

It was while involved on this first cabin Art Miller formed the idea for New Horizons Un-Limited, a non-profit organization for people with disabilities. He believed if people with disabilities were to be included in access to life opportunities, they needed to form a group that acting together, they could impact their collective futures. Three more cabins followed built by the Telephone Pioneers using the original design. Then in 2001, the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Accessibility Coordinator, Dotti Krieger, approached Art Miller to assist in standardizing the accessibility concept of the plans for the DNR's new "Cabin in the Woods" initiative. Through collaboration with the DNR, New Horizons Un-Limited, Miller Engineering Information Technologies Group and Strass-Maguire & Associates architects, they set forth a design directive for future Wisconsin state park accessible cabins. In 2004, the 5th accessible cabin, developed from these concept plans, was built at High Cliff State Park near Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. "The history of the Cabin in the Woods program is a tribute to the people of Wisconsin," Krieger said.

These initial cabins inspired the Friends Group of the J.M. Kohler-Terry Andrae State Parks near Sheboygan, Wisconsin and the Kiwanis Club of Westosha-Salem for the Richard Bong State Recreation Area near Burlington, Wisconsin. In 2006, the groups approached the design collaboration team for assistance on their respective 6th and 7th cabins for the Wisconsin State Parks. In April 2008, New Horizons Un-Limited was very excited to announce and celebrate the completion and dedications of these two accessible cabins.



In 2011 the Friends Group of Harrington Beach State Park approached the design collaboration team for design assistance for an accessible cabin to be built at Harrington Beach State Park. When the campground at HBSP was designed years earlier, one camping site located near Puckett's pond had been designated by the DNR to allow the construction of an accessible cabin. Through the effort of donated funds, matching grants, donated professional services from designers, architects, construction project managers, local skilled tradesmen and in-kind gifts the cabin was begun the summer of 2014.

## Harrington Beach State Park Accessible Cabin



The 8<sup>th</sup> accessible camping cabin nears completion at Harrington Beach State Park, Belgium, Wisconsin and views Puckett's pond and surrounding prairie woodlands in the park in Southeastern Wisconsin.

On July 8<sup>th</sup> the Friends Group of Harrington Beach State Park (HBSP), representatives from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), including the regional and park rangers and engineers, construction volunteers, workers, contractors, engineers, donors and families including family members of Jim Schendel (who in memoriam inspired the construction of this cabin) were on site at the dedication ceremony of the Harrington Beach State Park Accessible Camping Cabin.

Speaking of the history of the accessible cabins in the State Parks, Art Miller described how he was asked by the Telephone Pioneers to help design the first cabin, how they dreamed of building 5 more like it and how they designed and constructed the cabins to be built to last 100 years. Explaining to everyone how much the accessible amenities of the cabin can mean to those for whom it was built, he remarked, "You have no idea what this means to families who face each day with the challenges of disabilities and how much respite in the outdoors can mean to a family and the family member with disabilities. **It gives them hope for tomorrow to begin again!**"



These words were echoed by many of the speakers at the dedication as well as from the Wisconsin DNR representatives who thanked everyone and described the appreciation they have witnessed from those families who have benefited from the accessible cabins in the parks throughout the state of Wisconsin.



Carolyn Morgen, Superintendent/Interim Park Manager, thanked everyone who had been involved with the construction of the accessible cabin. She assured everyone that the many representatives from the DNR present at the dedication were there to express their gratitude to the volunteers who had dreamt it and built it. If anyone had any doubt whether this project was worth it, they need only spend a day in the main office at Kohler Andrea State Park to hear the testimony of grateful families, touched by the generosity of volunteer groups who built the cabins and appreciative of the opportunity to take their family member for a camping experience, something they never thought would be possible.





Ronnie Martin, President of the Friends Group, reminded us of Jim Schendel, a HBSP volunteer who had loved this park and worked tirelessly for the many accessible features for the park. It was at Jim's passing when family members asked for a bench in Jim's name, the group decided to build an accessible cabin instead. With Jim's memorial gift the seed was planted in the hearts of Andy Krueger, former HBSP manager, Danny Goldsmith, Ray Carey, Ronnie Martin and Jim's siblings, Denise Carney and Mary Movich of the Friends Group. Neil Kraemer and Ray Carey project managers soon asked Art Miller, Miller Engineering ITG and NHU and Lavern Nall, Strass Maguire Architects Assoc. Inc. for the design.

Wisconsin State Senator, Duey Stroebel commended the community of hard workers and friends to have the testament to come together and to give so much to make the cabin happen. He offered, "Congratulations for this fine achievement!"



Dan Schuller, DNR Bureau of Parks and Recreation Director, spoke of the variety of recreational activities available through Harrington Beach State Park and all the Wisconsin State Parks. "The parks are meant for all of us and this community has made it possible for those with disabilities to have the opportunity to enjoy them too. In this way the accessible cabin fulfills the vision of the state which has become the leader in accessible facilities across the U.S." On behalf of the citizens of Wisconsin he thanked everyone who had helped to take this cabin to completion, a phenomenal feat.

The site chosen for the cabin is located in the campground and overlooks Puckett's pond. A circular observation deck accessible from the cabin ramp capitalizes on the view of the pond. Eventually an accessible limestone trail will be added to lead the disabled visitor from the cabin to the accessible fishing pier at the pond. The cabin site will also have an accessible fire pit and outdoor picnic table.





Accessible features include a fully accessible bathroom and kitchen, two electric hospital beds, and an accessible sleeping porch. People in wheelchairs can move freely about the cabin from the entrance ramps, doorways, undercounter space and a roll-in shower. All fixtures and controls are accessible, including the faucets, toilet, and door handles. The cabin interior walls are finished in clear coated pine that adds a light, welcoming warmth to the camping experience.

In the coming weeks as the Friends Group put the finishing touches on the cabin, we look forward to the date when it opens and goes on-line to take reservations. Only 30 minutes from Milwaukee, this park with its accessible trails around Quarry Lake and expansive beach on Lake Michigan offers a wonderful outdoor opportunity for families challenged by disability.

Camping cabins offer a low cost option for enjoying the outdoors for people with physical disabilities who require accessible amenities. The opportunity to respite in the outdoors offers family members to bond in ways that may otherwise be more difficult, offers good nature therapy from life's stresses and helps individuals with disabilities and their families to become reinvigorated, "**It gives them hope for tomorrow to begin again!**"

There is a need for accessible cabins statewide as the initial state accessible cabins are filled to capacity throughout the camping season. The cabins in the state parks are always full and there are many people with disabilities who use these parks.

There are now eight accessible cabins in the following Wisconsin State Parks:

- Mirror Lake State Park - (Baraboo, WI)
- Kettle Moraine State Forest - Southern Unit (Eagle, WI)
- Buckhorn State Park - (Necedah, WI)
- Potawatomi State Park - (Sturgeon Bay, WI)
- High Cliff State Park - on Lake Winnebago (Appleton, WI)
- Kohler-Andrae State Parks – on Lake Michigan (Sheboygan, WI)
- Richard Bong State Recreation Area – (Burlington, WI)
- Harrington Beach State Park – (Belgium, WI)

For more information or a reservation application, call the Harrington Beach State Park at (920) 451-4080 or go to the Wisconsin DNR at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/camping/cabin.html>.

## As We Look to the Future

New Horizons Un-Limited will continue to assist where needed to outreach to people with disabilities about accessibility in the state parks to ensure that all people will be able to access the Wisconsin State Parks without barriers and we remain committed to assisting in the Accessible Cabins. We are also committed to encouraging other states to learn of the Wisconsin's example and expand the program across the nation.

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