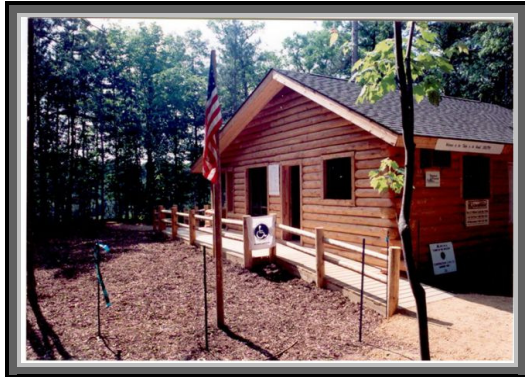


New Horizons Un-Limited

Serving Our Community Members with Disabilities Since 1994

Accessible Cabins Openings and Dedications Wisconsin State Parks

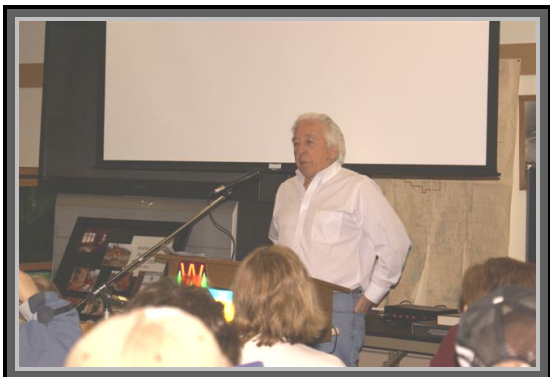


Mirror Lake State Park Accessible Cabin - 1991

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 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 not one, but these two, new accessible cabins at their respective state parks.



At the cabin openings, Art Miller said, "What had started as a seed of an idea has grown now to include the 6th and 7th cabins for the Wisconsin State Parks. The original cabins have become the "Tom Sawyer's fence" that others have come to continue and expand upon. It has been particularly rewarding to see each group, led by people who had knowledge of disability, dream of expanding the vision of including people with disabilities in the outdoor experience." These last two cabins were led by individuals with construction experience and achieved their dreams in a way similar to the first cabin in the state parks, through perseverance and tremendous community support and effort for which we are very grateful.

J.M. Kohler –Terry Andrae State Parks Accessible Cabin



On April 25, 2008, the 6th accessible cabin opened in the Wisconsin State Parks at J.M. Kohler-Terry Andrae State Parks. The Friends Group of Kohler-Andrae State Parks, inspired by the cabin at High Cliff, began to fundraise and plan the accessible cabin in 2005. Dottie Krieger, then accessibility coordinator for the DNR, introduced the Friends Group to the collaboration group of New Horizons Unlimited, Miller Engineering Information Technologies Group, and Strass Maguire & Associates, architects, to work on the design. Ken Anderson, DNR Southeast Region Construction Representative, coordinated the design and construction with the state.

James Buchholz, Natural Resource Property Supervisor, said at the opening ceremony that the cabin would not have been possible without the support of the Friends Group and Bryan Casper, who volunteered his time as general contractor for the cabin construction. He thanked New Horizons Unlimited, Miller Engineering Information Technologies group and Strass Maguire & Associates for their donation to the project and Guske Electric Inc., Neumann Plumbing and Heating and for all the gifts of materials and labor.



Jim Mohr, President, of the Friends of Kohler-Andrae State Parks, said the Friends Group raised money and sought almost \$50,000 in funding from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program, which provides state development funding through a 50/50 match grant to Friends organizations that support local state park and forest properties. The cabin cost \$125,000 including parking areas, picnic area, landscaping, deck, accessible trail and interior furnishings. \$76,000 were donated by individuals, foundations, corporations, cash and in-kind gifts.



At the opening, Art Miller of New Horizons Unlimited and Miller Engineering Information Technologies Group spoke of the beginning of the cabin projects and how they originally had to change legislation to be able to build the first cabin in the Wisconsin State Parks. He congratulated Bryan Casper and the Friends of Kohler-Andrae State Parks for carrying the torch of the cabin projects and implementing new accessible construction products.



At the opening several dignitaries came to dedicate the cabin. State Senator, Joseph Leibham congratulated the group on the matching stewardship funding and bringing the grant to benefit Sheboygan County and people with disabilities of the state. State Representative, Terry Van Akkeren congratulated the collaboration effort of state, private and community resources to make the cabin possible. Gloria McCutcheon, DNR Southeast Region Director, accepted the cabin for the state of Wisconsin. Bill Smith, DNR Bureau of Parks and Recreation Director, congratulated the group for the wonderful addition the cabin made to an already welcoming premier state park.

The site chosen for the cabin is located in the Family Campground and overlooks the Black River Marsh in the southwest corner of the park. This group added a circular observation deck accessible from the cabin ramp capitalizing on the view of the marsh. An accessible limestone trail was added that leads the disabled visitor from the cabin to the accessible board walk over the marsh. The cabin site also boasts an accessible fire pit and outdoor picnic table.



The quality of the craftsmanship of the interior finishes and attention to accessible detail reflect the group's effort and devotion to this project. Visitors at the opening were impressed with the accessible features of the cabin. Features include a fully accessible bathroom and kitchen, two electric hospital beds, and an accessible sleeping porch. People in wheelchairs moved freely about the cabin from the entrance ramps, doorways, undercounter space and a roll-in shower. Furthermore, 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.

Kohler-Andrae State Parks are just south of Sheboygan along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The park hosts disabled visitors for its accessible nature trail near the lake, accessible campsite, and the accessible Black River Marsh Boardwalk.

There is a need for accessible cabins statewide as the initial state accessible cabins are filled to capacity throughout the camping season. This park is one of the busiest in the state with more than 400,000 day users and 60,000 campers a year. The cabins in the state parks are always full and there are many people with disabilities who use these parks. Kohler-Andrae State Parks' new accessible cabin is no exception to the others in the state with many of the dates already full for the 2008 season.

For more information or a reservation application, call the Kohler Andrae State Parks at (920) 451-4080 or go to the Wisconsin DNR at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/parks/access/bigcabin.html>.

As We Look to the Future. . .

Through these two new cabins, the Cabin-in-the-Woods project has been indeed as Dottie Krieger said, “a tribute to the people of Wisconsin” and community effort. The project, from the beginning, set forth to use quality materials, products and craftsmanship to build cabins that would endure far into the future.

Each team reviewed prior cabins for trouble spots in construction, methods and materials, accessibility issues, and the needs and concerns of those who have used the cabins. Improvements in the underlying design and integration of the sleeping porch were made to accommodate more people through the camping season. Consideration was made for materials that would offer the cleanest safest environment to reduce allergens. The most recent cabins have the benefit of new products, levers, and controls designed for universal use and camper tested materials for flooring, shower walls and decking materials. From the beginning continued the directive to use the most energy efficient equipment, quality materials, products and craftsmanship possible, while maintaining cost efficiency with so much dependent on donations.

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. New Horizons Un-Limited remains committed to assisting in the Cabin-in-the-Woods project throughout the State of Wisconsin. We are also committed to encouraging other states to learn of the Wisconsin Cabin-in-the-Woods example and expand the program across the nation.

As we look to the future, we will encourage continued development of accessibility solutions, finding green building products, creating environmentally friendly, sustainable buildings and integrating the use of renewable energy sources while managing cost and continuing to encourage the building of quality enduring cabins.

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