

March 2023



*Advocating For Life:*

*A True Testimonial by Reverend David Patrick Scribbins*

My name is David Scribbins. I was only 13 months old when I was diagnosed with arthritis. It started out as a strep infection my body couldn't fight. I had a compromised immune system thus it mutated into full-blown arthritis attacking all of my joints throughout my whole body. I use a power wheelchair due to severe joint damage and I am non weight bearing so transfers are a little difficult but I do not let it stop me. Every day I deal with physical pain throughout my body but I have built up my pain tolerance to the point where I only have to take medication once a day which is Tylenol, ibuprofen, vitamin and mineral supplements, allergy meds, something to settle my stomach, and currently high blood pressure medication. Although the arthritis has done a number on my system it went into remission in 2000 at 18 years of age. I'm currently 41 years old and my arthritis is still in remission to this day but the damage has been done. I found along the way the best way to overcome barriers, find treatment that works for me and programs to assist is by self advocacy. During that process I realized how difficult it can be and experiencing my own troubles I became aware of so many

people that cannot advocate for themselves so I did some research on how I could get more involved to help advocate for others.

At the beginning of that process I was randomly stopping in to visit my mother at work who worked at the local Aging and Disability Resource Center when I was stopped one day by a couple of the employees and asked if I would sit in on one of their boards to see if I would like to join as a disability advocate. Since I was already considering doing such I thought it would be a good opportunity to see what it would be like. That began my journey in 2009 of a professional disability advocate. In that capacity I quickly rose to leadership roles. Even though I've only been doing this since 2009 professionally I have been an advocate and an educator to many since my diagnosis. I would allow students to come in my doctors appointments to learn more about my condition and how it could be treated. I have also, when asked, pointed people in the right direction and let them know of my struggles in hopes of relaying information that will aid them in their journey. We all search for our purpose in this life and I feel as if I was called to this mission. To this date I have been informed that through my work I have aided hundreds of people in their struggles and have been involved in oversight of projects accumulatively adding up to numbers in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Some of my appointments to boards are paid but most of them have been volunteer. Sometimes it's some of the most important jobs that involve no pay that are the most notable and rewarding in this world. Through my positions I do not seek fame and recognition, I only seek solutions and viable means of maintaining programs and funding for my state and local community. In many situations I have played the role of the unsung hero. We all have the chance to be an example and a voice for our community. Whenever one has a chance I would encourage all of you to come forward and make a difference for you, your family, your friends, and strangers at large.

I live alone independent in my home that I own. I have a modified vehicle I'm able to drive myself to and from locations and stay an active member of my community it keeps me safe and gives me access to emergency services should I have a medical emergency. I have also been able to hold and maintain many jobs that have allowed me to give back to my community and work as a disability advocate speaking for those who are unable to do so keeping oversight on programs such as transportation, managed care organization programs, accessible housing programs, group homes, retirement facilities, food programs, fundraising efforts and just about everything you can imagine that would be involved in the community. My access to many different technologies also allows me to go hang out with family and friends when I choose, go

out to eat, socialize, go listen to live bands, spend time in the wilderness, and travel to Packer games when I am able to go, enabling me to live my best life. Surrounding myself with technology and programs to assist my every day tasks has been a blessing giving me the opportunity to share my independence experiences with others and transforms my position from being disabled to living a fully able life.

My previous charges include fundraising initiatives for the arthritis foundation on TV and on the radio. Taking part in legislative sessions at the capital for transportation initiatives and disability advocacy. I was Chairperson for the Richland County Transportation Coalition Committee. I served as Executive member of the Wisconsin Long-Term Care Advisory Council. I was an Ad Hoc Committee member for the Ed Erwin award. I took part in the Safe Routes To School Initiative in Richland Center Wisconsin. I sat in on the Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Multi County Transportation Initiative. I worked with Act Now through Independent Living Resources improving access in our community including sidewalk and curb cut repair, requesting automatic doors and better store access. I was on the Wisconsin Transportation Finance and Policy Sub Commission. I have done multiple promotional videos for Inclusive. I presented for the self-determination conference in 2020 or 2021 virtually I believe. I recently attended the self-determination conference in 2022 in person sharing how technology aides me in my freedom and independence. I went to UW Milwaukee and got my instructor's license to teach the Passenger Assistance program for which I was active in teaching those classes and certifying drivers for nine years instructing on strategies on safely locking down wheelchairs and medical devices in vehicles while giving sensitivity training for different disabilities and how to overcome barriers with proper communication.

My current charges include; Chairperson for the Richland County Commission On Aging and Disabilities Board, Chairperson of The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Eagle Country Governance Board, Vice President for the Movin Out Board of Directors, I am a member of the Movin Out Finance Committee, I currently am the Chairperson for the Movin Out Governance Committee, I'm a member of the Movin Out 811 council and I am an Inclusive/Family Care Grievance and Appeals committee member on call for all counties. I have been a registered officiant since 2009 licensed to perform weddings, funerals, and prayer services for those who request. I appraise antiques and used goods for almost 31 years now. I am also currently working on a couple of personal projects writing a book of my life story and another one that involves my great aunt that was murdered in 1926 which is still unsolved.

I live in a small unincorporated community of Orion Wisconsin in Richland County that was the first village established in my County for which I am also involved in mediating problems and improving relationships. We all watch out for each other and help in any way that we can. During the summertime we meet for coffee at the Red Cedar Cafe once a week on Saturday mornings and catch up on current events. In my spare time I like to go to Packer games as I am a season ticket holder. I also enjoy watching other sports, a good movie, going deer hunting, watching the sunset over the Wisconsin River, and most importantly spending time with my 3 dogs who keep me company and are always there no matter what. Currently I am single, I don't have any children, and I've never been married. I do hope to change all three of those someday. Through my work I also find satisfaction in the fact that even though I don't have any children it is a way for me to look out for others children and ensure that there are programs to aid them as they age. When all is said and done it is all about giving back to my community and all of the programs that have aided me in being the successful person living with a major physical disability that I am today.

I leave you with this. For every good day that I have there are usually two not so good days to go along with it. The key to my success is surrounding myself with enough positivity to overcome the negative events that take place in my life. Always have goals and dreams no matter how far out of reach they seem. As we age things are bound to progress in the wrong directions making things harder. Tendons will stretch, muscles will atrophy, pain will be in plenty dished out as three square meals a day. Even still I shall trudge on at all cost. Adapt and overcome. No matter the odds never give up, for life is so short anyway and there are so many wonderful treasures this life has to offer. Thank you for reading and being a part of my journey. There is much more to my story but for the rest you'll have to wait for the books to come out. To Be Continued..