

September 28, 2008

Motivational speaker focuses on capabilities

Deaf and blind, Bryan Grubb shares his story

By *BRENDA J. DONEGAN*
The Marion Star

MARION - Bryan Grubb proved that having a disability does not have to be a deterrent to success.

Grubb, the keynote speaker at Thursday's annual Goodwill meeting, was born with Usher's Syndrome and uses two American sign language interpreters to help him give his motivational speeches. He is both deaf and blind.

Usher's Syndrome is a relatively rare genetic disorder that is associated with a mutation in any one of 10 genes. It is incurable at present. The syndrome is characterized by deafness and a gradual vision loss.

His sense of humor is not affected.

"If you get bored and start looking around, I won't know," he said through his interpreter. "If you snore, I won't know because I can't hear you."

The theme for the dinner was "Building Better Lives, One Job at a Time."

Several were recognized at the dinner, which had approximately 175 in attendance. Among them were the Cleo Ludwig family with the super supporter award, Marion Technical College Center for Workforce Development, the community partner award; Leah Dillinger, opportunity award; Larry Cline, volunteer award, and Wheel-A-Thon participants.

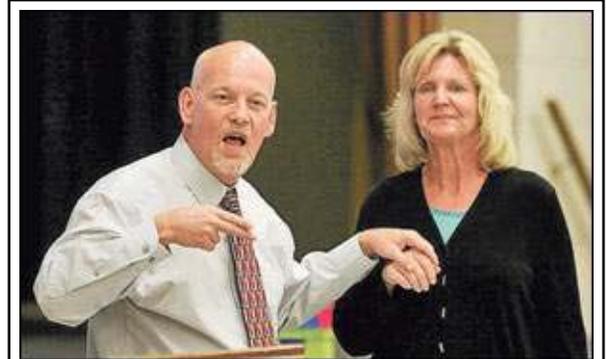
Touted as a motivational speaker, Grubb resides in Marysville and is active with the Union County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

He said he has found that people with disabilities are the people with possibilities and shares his story with others to encourage them to make the most of their own lives.

"We all have challenges and we all have difficulties," he said. "Maybe some have more than others, but we all can make a difference."

With Usher's Syndrome, Grubb was born without hearing and over time has lost his sight. When he speaks to groups, he said, he focuses on his capabilities instead of his disability.

Grubb attended the Ohio School for the Deaf where he was on the honor roll. He said when he was about 12 he wanted to play baseball on the Little League team. His mother took him and they accepted him as a teammate but he spent the season sitting on the bench. After begging with the coach to let him into the game, Grubb said he got a hit - his first ever.



Bryan Grubb answers questions from the audience during Goodwill Industries' 2008 Annual Meeting at the Tri-Rivers Career on Thursday. At right is interpreter Janet McKinley. (The Marion Star/James Miller)



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"I was so glad to be helpful to my team."

While in school, he said he had limited vision and signed up for drivers education. He was driving in Columbus when he nearly hit someone and was removed from the driver's seat by the instructor.

"He asked me, couldn't I see that car," Grubb signed, smiling. "When I told him no, he kicked me out of class."

Grubb attended the National Institute for the Deaf where his major was computers. He went with friends to the west coast, found a job with IBM, worked for a few months and decided to further his education. He went back to school at the Helen Keller Institute of Technology.

After completing that program, he got a job with the Internal Revenue Service using his computer skills inputting data into the computer using the tool zoomtext, pulling files for audit and fraud. He retired from the IRS and moved to Cleveland to be closer to family.

"I will carefully check the guest list tonight to see if any of you are on the list," he quipped, flashing another smile.

Not content to be retired, Grubb returned to Union County and through the Bureau Services for the Visually Impaired, was asked to be the kickoff speaker for MRDD month in Union County. When he finished, Grubb's job developer was asked if Grubb ever thought about being a motivational speaker.

"I was nervous and shaking in my shoes," Grubb signed.

With his job at the Union County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Grubb said he faces three challenges: learning how to hone his visual presentations without depending so much on his job developer, finding qualified translators and transportation

Bob Jordan, president and CEO of the local Goodwill, said Grubb is just another example of how Goodwill and other agencies take those with disabilities and help them lead productive lives.

"He (Grubb) exemplifies what we're all about, building better lives, one job at a time," Jordan said. "Through our programs and services we help our folks with such things as leadership, confidence, awareness, character, self-esteem, independence, relationships and skills. Bryan certainly showed tonight (Thursday) that they can lead successful lives and make valuable contributions."
