

Sweethearts defy odds to commit to each other

Disabled couple deals with struggles

BY JO MATHIS
The Ann Arbor News

Back in the '50s, Steve McNutt and Candy Adcock were preschool sweethearts at a Detroit school for disabled children.

They remained close for 10 years, then went their separate ways.

She married and was later widowed. He went on to earn an engineering degree at the University of Michigan and remained a bachelor.

Four years ago, a mutual friend gave Adcock's phone number to McNutt. They wrote. They met. And they decided to make a commitment.

"I loved her," said McNutt, 59, sitting in his Ann Arbor condominium recently. "And I was always looking for somebody. She's part of my life and I'm part of her life."

The couple, who have advanced stage cerebral palsy and are severely disabled, exchanged vows last summer at a wedding and reception at King of Kings Lutheran Church in Ann Arbor.

But finances prevented them from getting a marriage license.

"If we were married legally, our combined income would disqualify us from Medicaid," said McNutt. He and Adcock, 60, consider themselves married, if not legally so.

McNutt and Adcock are happy to be together and say they're grateful to be able to live in a condo by themselves, with the aid of assistants several hours each day.

"Personal-assistant services allow people such as Candy and me to live life to the fullest," McNutt said.

Their assistants are from Ann Arbor-based Partners in Personal Assistance, a program started by people with disabilities in 1999.

The goal, said co-founder Peg Ball, is to provide in-home and community-based personal assistant services so people with disabilities and the elder-



ALAN WARREN, THE ANN ARBOR NEWS



COURTESY STEVE MCNUTT

Above, Candy Adcock and Steve McNutt in a photo taken June 4. The couple, who have advanced stage cerebral palsy and are severely disabled, exchanged vows last summer at a wedding and reception at King of Kings Lutheran Church in Ann Arbor. At left, they kissed after exchanging vows. But finances prevented them from getting a marriage license.

SEE COUPLE A4

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COUPLE FROM A3

Personal assistants provide important aid

ly can maintain as much independence as possible. She said people may not realize just how important personal assistants are in the lives of those with disabilities.

"The bottom line for me is if I don't have someone to assist me, I don't get out of bed in the morning," she said. "I don't eat or use the bathroom. All those basic things don't get done without those people to help me."

PPA Chair Jody Burton Slowins said PPA differs from traditional home health services because the disabled person interviews and chooses his or her own assistants, helps determine what services are needed and can ask for flexible service hours.

Adcock said personal assistants allow her and McNutt to get out of the house and enjoy life. They go out to eat and to Tigers baseball games and recently vacationed in Washington.



COURTESY STEVE MCNUTT

Candy Adcock and Steve McNutt have been friends since childhood.

She said she admires her husband's tenacity.

"He's determined to do what everybody else does," she said. "He never gives up. He's a very good man. ... When they change the law, we will get married. We will

never give up."

For information, call 734-214-3890 or log on to www.annarborppa.org.

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SKYLINE FROM A3

20 to 25 staff members will be hired

McBrady. "We wanted to look at excellent schools across the country and learn about what they do. We made a commitment to work collaboratively, to collect data to look at ourselves, and most importantly to make sure that at the end of each day, our students know that they go to a school with teachers that care a great deal about their development, their education and most importantly, about them."

Students felt that from their teachers, they and their

parents say.

"(The teachers) did a good job connecting with the kids," said parent Don Smith, who has a daughter at Skyline. "I think that will be hard to keep going as more students come."

Next year, several hundred freshmen will add to this year's class. Another 20 to 25 staff members will be hired.

The school will be divided into four smaller "houses," each with a wing of the building of its own. Each house will have both sophomores

and freshmen in it.

The highlight of the year was seeing Skyline come together, McBrady said.

"Personally, the best part of the year was seeing the idea that was Skyline High School turn into a reality," McBrady said. "The months and years of planning become a school year filled with firsts. And I loved every minute of it."

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