

Gratitude is the Healthiest of all Human Emotions

By: Lorinda Gonzalez

Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for. - Zig Ziglar

A short cool breeze, early sunset, and pumpkins galore. It's November! One month before the holiday madness begins, and only days after we've been "spooked" and indulged in candy and treats. Aside from pumpkin spiced lattes and Thanksgiving dinner plans, November is marked as a time to remember the people and experiences we are most grateful for. While having a mindset of gratitude is an attitude to embrace year-around, November marks the time where together as a community everything around us reminds us to appreciate the good rather than focus on the bad. Many times, acts of kindness go unnoticed. This month, I'm going to share with you brief stories of two friends whose kindness has made a positive impact in my life.

Center for Social Change - A World Where Everyone Commits to Being the Solution.

As a grant writer, I rent a small office space where you'll find me – coffee in hand - writing lengthy proposals and researching funding sources for clients. The ease of opening the front door of a building, the height of office desks & counters, and ease of access to public areas come into play when choosing an accessible office space. Most importantly, working alongside people who are mindful and understanding of my needs are key. After touring eight different locations, Grants Ink found its new home at the Center for Social Change, located at 2103 Coral Way, Suite 200, Miami, Florida. During my first visit to the center warm and bubbly Community Curator, Naomi L. Ross greeted me with a kind and genuine smile. She eagerly showed me around the office, and within moments I felt right at home. She was aware and understanding of my needs for accessibility, but instead of treating me as someone who needed "special attention", I was just another entrepreneur seeking a workspace. Many times in an attempt to provide accessibility accommodations for a person with a disability to assimilate into the environment, people tend to get nervous and treat them as "different". It's easy to tell when the only thing on someone's mind is your wheelchair, when every other word is a sort of a soft sell of how and why they are "ok with your disability." Naomi's approach was completely different. She made me feel accepted and more importantly *normal* in the work setting. Sure, I needed a little extra space to get around and yes,



Naomi L. Ross. November 2015.

my desk had to be repositioned to accommodate my service dog. She didn't see any of these needs as a burden, but in her own words *"An opportunity for the center to become more accessible to all."* I knew immediately that I had found an office space where I could network with like-minded, positive, productive people who saw me as a professional – not a person with a disability. Later I found out that Naomi has an advanced degree in architecture, which has contributed to her superior understanding of what is spatially required to accommodate a wheelchair in an office setting. However, in all honesty I believe that it's her warm heart and kind demeanor that makes her so good at what she does. I am truly grateful for the Center of Social Change and especially, appreciative of Naomi's mindful efforts to encourage a connected and collaborative workspace. For her open-mindedness, acceptance and friendship, I'm truly thankful. She makes going to work each day a joy!

DMR Corporation – Finding Better Methods of Mobility and Freedom of Movement.

One morning, I woke up to my personal care attendant informing me that she had found the joystick of my motorized wheelchair lying on the floor. Waking up to a broken wheelchair is equivalent to starting the day with a dead car battery, flat tire, and a lost wallet – it puts a major damper on your plans, to say the least. Luckily, she was able to temporarily tape it back in place long enough for me to find a repair shop, because like most people I didn't take time to look for a durable medical equipment (DME) provider until things went south. Finding a DME who is available to repair a broken chair on short notice is extremely important to maintaining independence.



Left to Right: Lazaro Muniz, Lorinda Gonzalez and Angel Pardo. November 2015.

After contacting several repair companies – most who didn't have a technician on staff, others that never got back to me, and one who said they would be able to diagnose my chair... *in two weeks*, I came across DMR Corp, located at 10418 NW 31st Terrace, Doral, Florida. President Angel Pardo and his wife Rosie have dedicated over 30 years to meeting the challenging needs of the disabled community are proponents of independent living.

After a brief conversation with Service Technician Lazaro Muniz (left, pictured above), it became apparent that this company was different than the others, since he took my situation seriously and was invested in finding a solution. We scheduled an appointment for that same afternoon, and upon arrival, I was greeted and welcomed to the office. Instead of an overly corporate, stuffy environment, DMR made me feel like part of their family. Shortly after filling out the required paperwork, I met with Lazaro, who rapidly put me at ease with his pleasant demeanor. He

exuded the perfect combination of humor and humility, quickly turning a stressful situation into a fun afternoon. He knew right away what the problem was, explained what my options were, and got to work on the repair. I felt relaxed and confident in his skill level and knew that there was a positive end in sight. I sat down in the waiting area, enjoyed a hot cup of coffee, and before I knew it my chair was back in working order.

DMR Corp's motto is making possible what may seem impossible to others. Their hospitality and genuine care is conveyed in their authentic dedication to assisting individuals with disabilities acquire dependable medical equipment needed for independent living. Lazaro is a key player in the company's success, as his willingness to resolve challenges and dedication to his job is unmatched. Chair repairs are unavoidable, but having someone you can depend on to keep life moving in a forward direction turns a crisis into a minor setback.

This holiday season, take notice of the people around you and be open to expressing your love and gratitude for their presence. A simple thank you can completely change someone's day. As eloquently said by author William Arthur Ward, "*Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.*"

Author: Lorinda Gonzalez resides in South Florida with her family and service dog, Remy. She was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy at the age of three, and has used a motorized wheelchair for mobility since the age of nine. As an avid writer and reader, she has worked as a grant writer and editor since 2009. With the help of her family, it has grown to become a successful endeavor. Lorinda holds a Bachelor in the Arts Degree in English Writing and Rhetoric, and is currently completing a Masters of Arts Degree in Communications. She is a co-founder of NMD United, 501(c)3 and on the board of multiple non-profit organizations. In her free time, Lorinda enjoys spending time with family and friends, painting, listening to music, and traveling to historical locations.

