

BIOS:
Kathy Conour

Kathy grew up as an only child on Bates Avenue in Springfield, Illinois. She attended high school in Chicago. Her first job took her to a sheltered workshop in Ottawa, Illinois. Despite the objections of her parents, she was determined to live independently. To avoid being placed in a nursing home, Kathy had to find a solution. So when she met Diana Braun at the same sheltered workshop in 1970, she teamed up with Diana. It was a good match. They began a friendship that has lasted 38 years.

After trying foster care, Diana and Kathy found their first apartment and began their experiment in interdependent independent living. While living in Kankakee, she and Diana became frustrated with the high cost of taking cabs everywhere. With Kathy's support, Diana took two years of studying, but eventually learned to drive. Now, with the mobility of a van, they travel all around the country.

Kathy received her Bachelor degree in Social Work from Olivet Nazarene College with a minor in Business Administration. Using a Pathfinder electronic communication device, Kathy writes articles, responds to email and makes speeches.

Born with Cerebral Palsy, Kathy had some mobility but lost that when she had to have an operation on a spinal cyst in 1990. Diana compliments Kathy's skills and helps Kathy in and out of her power chair, attends to her personal needs like dressing and eating, and helps her answer email.

Kathy is a leader and an activist for disability rights. She pursues positions of leadership and advocacy. Recently she served on the board of United Cerebral Palsy of Illinois. In the past she has been active in the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Illinois Center for Independent Living, and People First. A well-know activist on the national scene, she is often invited to speak at conferences and conventions.

Diana Braun

As an 8-year-old child, Diana found herself living in a state run nursing home in Freeport, Illinois. Taken away from an abusive family, Diana and her brothers and sisters were scattered. At 12 she was sent to the Dixon Developmental Center. She vowed to one day close state run institutions and has devoted her life to doing just that. In her own words, "Institutions are not a safe place to be."

At 19 Diana left Dixon, a state run institution. After meeting Kathy Conour at a sheltered workshop 38 years ago, they began a pioneering friendship. She took on the ambitious job of personal assistant or PA to her friend and housemate, Kathy Conour.

Since that time her activist commitments have led her to be president of People First, a self-advocates group, and a member of the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities. Recently she served on the board of the Illinois Arc, an organization involved in advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities. Illinois is one of the states that still has a large number of people living in institutions, so Diana has her hands full with her advocacy work and her personal assistant tasks.

Diana and Kathy also travel to present at conferences and visit elected representatives. In February of 2005, as seen in *Body and Soul: Diana and Kathy*, they went to Washington and met with the offices of Senators Obama, and Dirksen.

Diagnosed with Down Syndrome, Diana drives, cooks, maintains her home and attends to the needs of her friend of 38 years, Kathy Conour. Diana attends church and goes to an annual retreat for people with disabilities at Our Lady of the Snows in Bellville, Illinois. At home her cat, Trouble, keeps her out of trouble.