

HTC Newsletter

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Hello HTC Members,

Let me introduce myself to the members I have not already met at our rallies, I am Loretta Spotts. I live in Colorado Springs, Colorado, with my Husband Dan Spotts and little dog Reno. Between my husband and I, we have eight adult kids and twenty-six grandkids. Needless to say, we keep very busy. Other than family, we also are very active volunteers for the Paralyzed Veterans of America, Mountain States Chapter. Beyond the personal stuff, I am your new HTC Club President.



We all enjoyed a great Rally in Elkhart, Indiana, last month. The friendships we have formed within this group are priceless. Playing table games, rolling and galloping races, and singing Karaoke, I use the word "singing" loosely. Sharing mealtimes, and anything else we conjure up tends to make our bonds stronger each time we gather together. Technology has also made it possible for members who for some reason cannot be there in person to also join our annual business meeting via Zoom, so we get together one way or another.

It has been an ongoing question in the group as to what we should do with all the photo albums put together over the years. Guess what? The perfect solution presented itself in Elkhart during the week we were there. The RV Hall of Fame Museum in Elkhart County, Indiana, was delighted to add our collection to their museum library. Anyone can go into the library and learn about HTC and thumb through the albums. What better way to preserve our history!

Next year the HTC Annual Rally will take place in the Western Region, Wagon Masters are Will and Jessie Robinson. Time and place are in the works. Next year will be the 50th Anniversary of the club so we hope to see you all there.

Please contact me if you have thoughts to share, questions to ask, improvements to be made, etc. (President@handicappedtravelclub.com or 719 510-7737).

Sincerely,

Loretta Spotts

September 11th-17th, 2022 in Elkhart, Indiana
Campground Rally Report
By Wagon Master, Bill Gratzke

The HTC Club had another successful Annual Rally. This marked our 49th year as an organization. Our usual good times with fellow Club members included lively conversation, a karaoke night, a potluck dinner, catered pizza and Amish dinners. Also, wheelchair races and mock horse races; an abundance of fun and laughter. Many evenings gathered around the glowing camp fire socializing. Card and board games were played every day.

The Club made reservations for a tour of the RV Hall of Fame Museum. While we were there, the Club made arrangements to donate our Historian Roland Winters's many photo albums of past HTC Club rallies to the RV Hall of Fame Museum Library. Now many of the museum's visitors will have an opportunity to see that they can still camp, as they find ways to accommodate their needs.

We were sad to leave our camping friends, but energized by people here who are accomplishing our Club motto "Get Out & Live". I laughed more than I have since the pandemic began, especially during the wheelchair races and karaoke.

We had a BraunAbility representative speak to us, as well as a Harbor View representative who brought one of their travel trailers with a UVL (under vehicle lift) and roll-in shower for us to view. We will be working with them to make available a vehicle with a lift or ramp to pull trailers.

We also shared knowledge about many things: how to find reasonably priced or free camp sites, cybersecurity, ways to obtain Wi-Fi, and manage user names and passwords, etc. Websites found beneficial are [safetydetective.com](https://www.safetysafety.com/), as well as [rvmobileinternet.com](https://www.rvmobileinternet.com/).

Website Links:

BraunAbility <https://www.braunability.com/us/en.html>

Harbor View Trailers <http://harborview.henterpriseinc.com/>

RV Hall of Fame Museum <https://www.rvmhhalloffame.org/>

Mobile Internet Resource Center <https://www.rvmobileinternet.com/>

Safety Detective <https://www.safetydetectives.com/>

My Adventures in the Winnebago Roam

By Ron McClain

Just before my wife Toxey died 1 ½ years ago we sold our accessible 30 foot Winnebago Vista.

I muddled through the Covid-19 restrictions without much problem. Then I broke my right ankle and could not drive for four months. This gave me time to decide to get back on the road. I came across a video ad for the new Winnebago Roam.

Although I don't use a wheelchair most of the time, I use several wheelchairs for their usefulness. The new Winnebago Roam's UVL (under vehicle lift) and wet bath drew my attention. I could make this vehicle work, this could be like my own traveling hotel room.

One of my rules had been to never buy a vehicle online. Winnebago decided to offer the Roam Van only at several LaMesa RV dealers across the country; the closest dealer to me was in Sanford, Florida, I am in Massachusetts. Since, I had a good relationship with Winnebago on my other accessible RVs, I decided to break my rule about buying online. I ordered my Winnebago Roam van in early spring this year. It was delivered to the LaMesa dealer in early August 2022. I had it shipped to my home, which cost approximately \$4,000. This was worth it for me to avoid driving my Toyota wheelchair van to the dealer and then shipping my Toyota home.

After checking the van for accessibility here are my findings. No automatic sliding entry door is available. The van is not practical for a person using a wheelchair most of the time. My mechanic said it was not possible to add an automatic sliding entry door. The microwave is located in the upper cabinet area and is not accessible from a wheelchair, or me. Also included is the proverbial 'kitchen sink'. There is no propane, which I like, but there is an electric outlet for an induction cooktop, but no cooktop is included! Why Winnebago would include an outlet, but no cooktop is insane. Cooktops are inexpensive. Really? This is a do it yourself kitchen! Next comes the wet bath which I like. It has a cassette toilet which eliminates the often headache of the black water tank. I didn't have the Roam long enough to empty the cassette! Also did not have time to make full use of the bath it appeared functional and accessible.

Only one of the four or five upper cabinets, and slide outs are workable for a person using a wheelchair. The problem is the magnets are too powerful for me to open. A friend took out one on each so I could access them. The cabinets over the bed are almost inaccessible. The couch, automatically turns down into a large, two person bed. Never had the opportunity to turn on the TV.

The reason I didn't make it to the Rally in Elkhart, Indiana is that I had a front right tire blowout about two hours away near Toledo, Ohio! I tried my best, with the intention of showing Winnebago's new production line accessible van camper.

Now I'll go into my personal problems with purchasing the van, and preparing for my trip plus more! There were no options available except a raised roof with sleeping for two, but the air conditioner is eliminated. I wanted an awning installed but Winnebago engineers said no as it would void the warranty. I had to explain to them that an awning was an essential item. They relented and allowed the dealer to install a Fiamma awning. I never was able to deploy the awning before the fire occurred. After the Roam was delivered to my house, it took three days for me to get inside! The house batteries were dead and the chassis battery was very low. There was no option for a powerchair to be added to the driver or passenger seat area.

Now come the real problems. There was no bill of sale or certificate of build (in lieu of a title) which are needed to apply for Massachusetts title and registration. The LaMesa dealer stated that they sent the application for title and registration to the Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Registry. Today is September 29th and the applications have not arrived. I was given a Florida temporary registration so I could attend the rally.

I loaded the Roam with all that I needed for my three week trip. I purchased several hundred dollars of 30 amp extension cords, hoses, and an induction cooktop and required cookware. I loaded the van with all my good clothes including my prized Hawaiian shirts and Greek Fisherman Caps, plus everything I needed including my medications and a fully stocked mini fridge. I was finally ready and left my home on September 6th.

Then the unthinkable happened. On September 8th on the Ohio Turnpike while in a construction zone and in the right hand lane with an 18 wheeler to my left, my right front tire blew. The van tried to pull right, but there was a steep drop-off, I did all I could to keep the van going straight. All of a sudden the left tire must have taken over and the van jerked left into the Jersey barrier on the left, just missing that 18 wheeler.

I remember seeing my left outside mirror flying off. Somehow I brought the van off of the roadway and onto the construction area. That's when the smoke and flames started outside the driver side window. I assumed the fire was from the tire.

I attempted to get out the sliding door; it would not open! I called 911 in a panic. I told the operator "I do not want to die this way!" At this point the dash was in flames and smoke filled the van. They say that sometimes you can muster extra strength in a panic situation. This was one of those times! I believe that I was helped by Toxey as a friend had velcro'ed a jar with some of her ashes on a shelf next to the door. The door surprisingly opened and the lift deployed a few feet, enough for me to get my rollator out. Two men just passing by ran over and said they had to get me out before the van blew up. I know vehicles blow up in movies, but rarely in real life. Well, I was in for a surprise! Those two men carried me to their truck a hundred feet or more away.

All three of us sat on the back bumper of their work truck looking at the now fully flame engulfed van. Then 'IT' happened! The first explosion followed by four more explosions! Full gas tank, followed by the four deep cycle batteries? The sliding door flew out like it was a piece of paper! But, thank God, I was alive and uninjured!

The state trooper brought me to a motel near the Toledo Airport and Enterprise Rent-A-Car, as I have been a longtime customer. I was able to use my one surviving credit card that was in my shirt pocket to buy gas and food, and pay for the motel, but I couldn't rent a car without a license! My wallet was in the dash in the fire. I went to the University of Toledo Medical Center to get medications as all of mine were lost. The Medical Center kept me overnight. My son-in-law, who is the best ever, left Connecticut and drove straight out to get me! We drove straight back and arrived home at 6 a.m. on Sunday. Home and alive, what more could I ask for.

Now I am in the process of getting back all my 'stuff'. I had most of my everyday articles in the van. Winnebago says they are helping with the title and registration issues and their Accident Investigator has been in contact with me.

All will be resolved. I made it out unhurt so "Life is Good!"

Ron McClain

Future Events

2023 Fall Date and location TBD 2023 HTC Annual Rally

The 2023 HTC Annual Rally is in the planning phase, please check for more information in the January newsletter.

Rally Wagon Masters are Will and Jessie Robinson (425) 889-0183.

Newsletter Submissions: Please submit material for inclusion in the newsletter to the editor William Robinson at email address Editor@handicappedtravelclub.com. If possible, send submission materials in two weeks prior to the quarterly publication months, which are: January, April, July, October. If you need to send submission material via USPS paper mail, call Will at 425-889-0183 for mailing address and coordinating receipt of paper mail.

Advertising: \$100 for full page; \$50 for 1/2 page; 1/4 page \$35; 1/8 page \$20.

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For fun and fellowship