



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## WNY Community Comes to Aid of Depew Family to Help their Twin Daughters with Cerebral Palsy

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY August 9, 2013

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*After years of work, the Geary family of Depew finally celebrates the completion of renovation work that makes their home more accessible to serve the needs of their twin daughters with cerebral palsy.*

*Senator Kennedy partnered with the family to generate widespread community support, and pushed state bureaucracy to be more responsive to their call for help.*

*Kennedy: This is a uniquely Western New York story. Our community came together to help a neighbor in need.*

DEPEW, N.Y. – Twin sisters Amber and Ashley Geary know what it's like to overcome adversity. Since birth, both girls have lived with cerebral palsy – a debilitating disease that has forced them to endure great struggles, but has failed to deter their spirits.

The girls, who are now 15 years old, have not been alone in their fight. Their parents, Tim and Debby Geary, have dedicated themselves to doing everything they possibly can to help their girls live happy, fulfilling lives. They've also made it their top priority to keep their daughters at home with them, but to do so, their house required substantial renovations to make it more accessible.

Prior to the renovation work that has now been completed, all of the bedrooms and bathrooms in the family's home were on the second floor, but Amber and Ashley cannot climb stairs due to their disability. That meant Debby and Tim had to carry the girls up and down the stairs – which became a danger for the girls, and their parents, as they grew older.

The Geary family was in need of help. The safety of their children depended on them building handicap-accessible facilities on the first floor of their house. They reached out to the community for support.

After meeting Senator Tim Kennedy at a "Senator on Your Street" event in 2011, they worked with the Senator to build on some of their early successes in tracking down help. With the support of Senator Kennedy and the relentless work of the Geary family, the community came together to help. Donations of time, money and labor began streaming in.

Meanwhile, Senator Kennedy pushed the state to be more responsive to the Geary family and all local families who have encountered the state's bureaucracy when trying to access support for their loved ones with disabilities. Kennedy's focus has been on getting the state Office for People with Developmental Disabilities to fully support the Geary's project

through a state program that provides funds for renovations to help keep individuals with disabilities in their home – where care is better and cheaper than institutional settings.

As the Geary family and their community contributors completed the addition to their home (the state program can't finance projects that add square-footage to residential property), the state provided accessibility equipment – such as a handicap-accessible toilet, grab bars and other features – for the interior of the new addition.

Now, after pursuing this project for years, the new, accessible addition to the Geary family's home has finally been completed.

“Thank you to everyone who helped with our building project,” said Amber Geary. “You don't know how amazing it feels to be able to move around my house without difficulty. I love my specially-designed Hunger Games room!”

“We are so thankful to everyone who put in their time and effort to help us raise the quality of life for our twins,” said Deb and Tim Geary. “We feel so relieved we can start focusing on family time now that we don't have to worry about the obstacles around a non handicap assessable house.”

“This is a uniquely Western New York Story. Our community came together to help a neighbor in need. Deb and Tim Geary's persistence and commitment to their daughters is truly inspiring,” Senator Kennedy said. “I've been honored to help the Geary family gain access to the support they needed from our community, and I'll keep fighting to ensure the state understands the urgency and importance of helping individuals with disabilities remain at home with their family. Helping families stay together ensures better care for people with disabilities, and it's far less costly for the state than long-term care settings.

“This significant quality-of-life improvement for Amber and Ashley Geary,” Kennedy added, “was only achieved through the Geary family’s tireless work ethic and unwillingness to quit when it came to the health and safety of their children. The businesses and organizations that have stepped up to help the Geary’s should be commended for their commitment to our community.”

The Geary family held a ribbon-cutting ceremony Friday to celebrate the completion of the renovation project and to express deep gratitude for everyone who has helped advance this project toward completion.

The family has received donations and support from DiPizio Construction, Great Lakes Concrete, Roberts Shackleton Boy Architects and Engineers, Lancaster Blueprinting, Zelasko Construction, Christian Youth Corps, Crist Construction, Mader Construction, Darling Paint & Restoration, Sherwin Williams, J.W. Danforth Company, Madison Carpet One, Besroi Roofing and Siding, Energsmart, Pulaski Police Association, The Service Collaborative of Western New York, Lancaster Plumbing, Executive Concrete, Simoncelli Electric, Schaefer Supply, Joey’s Pizza, Meier Supply, Emerson Swan, Plumber Local 22 and Sean Calway.

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate’s 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*