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Meet

Dwayne Szot

Founder, Inventor, President



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Painting and Chalking: For Everyone and Everything

By David Block

Imagine while navigating your wheelchair down the street, the chair itself starts painting the road without your hands contributing! Imagine your wheelchair chalking up the road as you move across it. A few decades ago, these ideas would have seemed ludicrous. However, they are no longer ideas, but actualities thanks to the creative efforts of the fully able bodied Dwayne Szot. The 50 - year -old Szot of Bayfield, Wisconsin, developed these adaptive tools and many others. His compassion for people with disabilities ignited its first spark while he was growing up in a Midwest foster home. His foster brother and foster sister both had Cerebral Palsy.

Szot remembered that his foster sister's bus stop was about a mile away from their home and getting there required walking on a gravel road.

"I had to pull her in the wagon to her bus stop because she couldn't walk that fast," said Szot. "Her crutches also slowed her down."

His ability to build and fix things developed during



his childhood. "I had no choice," Szot remembered, "because there was no hardware store near us. If you broke something, you had to fix it yourself."

Szot credited these childhood experiences as being his first steps toward developing Zot Artz.

The Launching of Zot Artz

After Szot earned his MFA in sculpture from Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Rockefeller Foundation awarded him grant money to create Zot Artz. Established in 1990, Zot Artz developed a number of mechanical tools to allow people with disabilities to experience the joy of creating art.

One invention was the chalk walk and roll. A chalk drawer attached to a walker or wheelchair, allowed the less able individual to see chalk cover up the road or sidewalk as he or she navigated through those areas.

Another invention was the art roller. This invention caused the wheelchair to paint while the wheelchair user rolled down the street. The art roller is a small compact roller printer that attaches to the front of the





wheelchair with a bridge that has Velcro on it. “It is a printing press,” said Szot. “It puts the paint onto the print.”

Szot loves seeing the smiles on kids’ faces when they use these mechanical tools, because they now can draw and paint like their able bodied peers.

Szot remembered that when he attached the chalk walk and roll to a boy’s wheelchair, the latter was so excited that he immediately took off and rolled his wheelchair into a busy street.

“I had to chase after him because there was too much traffic,” Szot said. “He was having a good time chalking up the street and dodging cars. I was more afraid than him.”

Szot’s website explains that instead of finding ways for people with disabilities to participate in activities for able bodied individuals, Zot Artz creates activities and projects for less able individuals, where the fully able bodied persons can take part.

Participants benefit by enhancing their motor and social skills, concentration, and self esteem.

Zot Artz has created hundreds of special art events around the world, and helped schools, museums, residential and day centers, independent living centers, park and recreation programs and others put the art tools to work in their programs.

“I only have a few people working with me and we have a low marketing budget,” said Szot. Word of mouth, appearing at disability expos, help him get the word out about Zot Artz.

For more information, log onto www.zotartz.com

