



Disabled on 'Freedom Ride' to Stop Social Labels

Reported by: Iris Pérez - WMBD/WYZZ

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PEORIA - People diagnosed with disabilities are on a freedom ride to break the chains of social labels.

People like Theresa Sies, who was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder, and lived in a nursing home for nine and a half years.

Outside of Peoria's AmericInn Sies hugs her mentor, "Linda" with tears of joy streaming from her eyes because she is free from the bondage she says she experienced at the nursing home.

"I was beaten, abused, gave me meds that made me dopey, because every things a line, they don't listen to what we have," recalled Sies.

Sies says doctors told her she would never live a full life

"They told me I would never ever be able to go to school, be able to be functioning on my own, I would be disabled all my life...now I'm going to school, got a job, I can do all things on my own. I'm an advocate for people."

Which is why she and her supporters are on a quest to Springfield, IL to call for the right to pursue happiness as they see fit.

"The reason we're going to Springfield is because that's where the legislatures work and we're taking the message to them that people deserve freedom and an opportunity to live the lives they choose," Jen Knapp.

So as the group makes a pit stop for lunch they slap fives, and share ideas about what they want for others seeking freedom from institutional discrimination.

"Everybody deserves a chance to be out in the world doing like what we're doing working and making money," said rider "Alicia."

A dream Sies says she cherishes and wants others who are considered disabled to experience, too.

"I have a home and that means so much to me, I never got to have my own stuff, and that means so much to me. I got my rings back, I get to have a boyfriend, that means so much to me!"

Freedom Quest is expecting to meet in Springfield on the 21st. From there the group will join other Freedom Quest riders in the Capitol Building Rotunda.

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