



David Copperfield – Working Magic For The Disabled

David Copperfield. The name alone conjures up mystical thoughts of grand illusion and death defying feats of magic. To countless numbers of disabled men, women and children around the globe however, the name represents much more than a magical illusion – to them, David Copperfield and Project Magic represent hope.

Since its inception in 1981, David Copperfield's Project Magic has aided in the rehabilitation of disabled patients through the use of magic. By joining the talents of entertainment professionals with those in the medical field, this non-traditional program provides a quality of therapeutic training far in advance of traditional rehabilitative programs and techniques. The program is designed to help the disabled achieve dexterity, visual skills perception, coordination, problem solving and other therapeutic goals.

Developed by David Copperfield, and organized with Julie DeJean, OTR (Occupational Therapist), Project Magic was the outgrowth of a budding correspondence from an aspiring young magician. "Early in his career, David received fan mail from a young man, who he thought was an elementary school student. After 3 or 4 letters, the young man enclosed a news article which detailed his own career and also showed a picture of himself. The young man, who was actually in his twenties, was disabled and in a wheelchair," Ms. DeJean said.

Impressed with the young man's self-image of being a magician rather than disabled, David Copperfield set about to develop an innovative way to help individuals with disabilities during their therapy process – that way was Project Magic. Endorsed by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) in 1982, Project Magic has since developed to international status and has been put to work in thousands of facilities throughout the world. Today, the Project Magic program is also included in alcohol and drug rehabilitation treatment centers, arthritis and stroke

centers, Easter Seal facilities, and school systems with special-need and learning disabled programs. "There are many neat adaptations of the program," Ms. DeJean said. "A woman who volunteered at a children's run away shelter used the Project Magic program. She found it helped build self esteem in the youngsters and also helped foster a closer relationship between the counselors and the children."

Ms. DeJean explained how this unique program additionally offers another important aspect apparent to those working with Project Magic. "Because most people with disabilities come to believe they are less capable than non-disabled people, the ability to perform simple magic allows them to do something others cannot. Project Magic helps create a sense of accomplishment for the performer, which raises their self-esteem and motivation. Both are essential to rehabilitation."

Touched early in his own career by the hand of a young disabled man, David Copperfield set about to make magic for those impaired by a disability. His foresight and sensitivity to those less fortunate created a rehabilitative program embraced by patients and medical and entertainment professionals around the world. Mr. Copperfield says, "There is nothing I do that is more important."

Project Magic is a non-profit organization. It is governed by a Board of Directors with David Copperfield as its active chairperson. The Kansas Rehabilitation Hospital is the home of Project Magic. For further information about Project Magic write or call:

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