

making a difference

By Hannah Barnes, Communication Specialist at Hammer Residences



Joe Fryer and Hammer's CEO, John Estrem, share stories about the organization.



Ted and Cathy enjoy dinner at the Hong Kong Buffet.



Ted and Cathy on the night of their dinner together.

Hammer Residences' Reach for Ralph a Success

A Night To Open Your Heart To Hammer

Reach for Ralph was once again a success! On July 12, friends, both old and new, gathered for Hammer Residences' annual fundraiser at the Earle Brown Center. This year's theme was "Open Your Heart to Hammer." With the community's support, they raised over \$320,000 to fulfill our mission of helping individuals with disabilities live life to its fullest. The night was filled with laughter and joy, opening with a silent auction and games, followed by dinner with friends.

During the program, which was hosted by NBC News Correspondent Joe Fryer, they shared heartfelt stories about several individuals who live in a home supported by Hammer. Among the stories shared were Friday nights with the women who live at our Rockford home, the friendship of Daniel and Ali, and "Lunch with Ted."

The evening capped off with the live auction and fund-a-need. One of the favorite items auctioned off featured a unique twist, an opportunity to have lunch with Ted, which went along with the



Ted enjoys the Reach for Ralph program.

video about him. Ted agreed to auction off two lunches, one of which was won by Cathy Peel.

"I wanted to do [the lunch] the next day, I was so excited," Cathy said. "I said I could do the first time he's available in August."

Lunch with Ted

Ted and Cathy agreed to get together on August 6. What was initially going to be a lunch turned into a dinner, so Cathy could visit and tour the home where Ted lives, prior to the meal. Ted was excited when Cathy arrived, sporting his signature light-up bow tie. Following the tour of the home, the two went to Hong Kong Buffet, one of Ted's favorite restaurants.

The two talked about anything and everything, discussing Ted's family life, visits to Colorado, camping, sports, and his life supported by Hammer. Ted showed off his sense of humor, imitating the announcers of one of his favorite things to watch, wrestling. Ted and Cathy had a great time that evening, and they agreed that they would see each other again soon.

They were both excited to make a new friend. "I haven't stopped thinking about [the evening]. He made me feel as special as I felt being with him," Cathy said. "I can tell he thrives on meeting new people and making connections. It's an important part of who he is. I think making new friends helps you grow as a person and keeps you grounded. It opens up your heart."

The night concluded with dessert and opening up fortune cookies. Cathy's fortune read, "There's a true and sincere friendship between you both," a fitting depiction of the evening.

To watch "Lunch with Ted," visit Hammer.org/about/media-room.

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