

# "More Than a Buffalo"

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Living in Buffalo, it is very common to see Buffalo-themed signs and statues around town. These not only show the love for the city, but they can also represent the various places they have come from and the unique themes or designs they encompass.



In 2001, People Inc. acquired a buffalo statue through the online auction that raised funds for the Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Burchfield-Penney Art Center. The buffalo was displayed, for all to see, right outside the People Inc. headquarters on North Forest Road in Williamsville, NY. It was there that the buffalo became a unique fixture to People Inc. and represented the City of Buffalo. To People Inc., it also represented the relationships that People Inc. has with others and being connected within the community.

Unfortunately, throughout time and the wear and tear of weather, the statue was damaged and needed some repairs. Because of the damage, it was removed from the spot in front of the People Inc. headquarters and moved to People Inc.'s Arts Experience, a fine arts day habilitation program for adults with developmental disabilities

In the hands of People Inc.'s Arts Experience, the buffalo statue was able to be repaired and painted by the participants and staff. Senior Day Supervisor of the Arts Experience Program Anne Paulk said that within this group, "About 15 participants worked on this statue and due to the damage that it had been through, it took those involved a few years to repair the statue." Anne shared that this job was, "Very time consuming because this piece of art had to be stored and put away in between working on it."

Before refurbishing the buffalo, the Arts Experience Program selected a theme for it, which is "love, community and inclusion." They selected this theme by "giving

everyone a template of the statue and going through the drawings and pulling elements from each." The Arts Experience Programs' participants portrayed this theme on the Buffalo statue by creating different hearts, mandalas and designs that were special to them.

Anne said that this theme is a good representation of People Inc. as a whole because, "This artwork, which is made by people with disabilities, is being seen and accepted by the whole community, which is what People Inc. aims to do. It also represents that People Inc. is a support agency for the community as well." While repainting and repairing the buffalo statue, Anne said, "It was such a fun experience and it was great how everyone's ideas came together. I am also very proud to be able to be involved in such an important project."

The buffalo statue not only got a makeover, but was placed in a new location as well. Its new home is now outside of the Museum of disABILITY History located at 3826 Main Street, Buffalo, NY. The Museum, which was established in 1998, is a project of People Inc. It is the only one of its kind in the United States and is dedicated to advancing the understanding, acceptance and independence of people with disabilities. The Museum's exhibits, collections, publications, archives and educational programs create awareness and a platform for dialogue and discovery.

The buffalo statue truly fits at the Museum, where it showcases the amazing artistic abilities of people with disabilities.

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