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For Immediate Release:

**Direct Support Professional Uses Innovation and Hard Work to Help Client**

Monday, September 8, 2008 - St. Joseph Michigan – This week is National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week, a week designated by the US Senate to honor the important work and dedication of direct care workers. One such worker is Joe Scrima, an employee of AWS who recently went above and beyond to make a client’s dream come true.

For Elroi, 21, an AWS client, suffers from Sickle Cell Anemia. He suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed from the right elbow to the right hand and from his knee to his foot on the right side. He does however, have a lot of strength on his left side. One day when Joe and Elroi were shopping at Meijer, Elroi expressed to Joe how much he wished he could ride a bicycle.

Never one to say “never,” Joe set to work on an adapted bike that would work for Elroi. They bought a standard Huffy bike and began to deconstruct and reconstruct it. Because Elroi would need extra stability, Joe found a bar stool with a back that would serve as the seat. He put double training wheels on the bike to prevent it from tipping. He attached Velcro straps to the right handlebars to help keep Elroi’s right hand in place while riding and a steel stirrup helps steady his right leg.

Additional modifications required welding, so a local company that specializes in welding helped with that part of the bike project. Elroi and Joe were both equipped with welding masks as they watched the bike take form. The last step was to affix a mounting platform that would help Elroi get on and off the bike safely. The entire project took a little more than six weeks and Joe said he and Elroi are still adding some finishing touches. “I’m so thrilled that this worked out for Elroi,” said Joe. “With a little imagination and determination, we were able to create a bike that is safe and fun for him. Joe said that Elroi helped with the entire process from start to finish. Together, they made Elroi’s dream of riding a bike, a reality.

Founded in 1960, the mission of AWS is to help children and adults with disabilities, live as independently as possible, be included in the community and function at their maximum potential. AWS serves nearly 7,000 individuals throughout Indiana, Ohio and Michigan.