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## Disabled woman, 53, earns GED

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After eight years, Marie Braun, a Covington disability rights activist, has earned her GED.

"Sometimes I put it off and did things for other people," she said.

Motivation came four years ago. The 53-year-old Covington resident was offered a job in Frankfort as a paid advocate for the disabled. The hitch was that she needed her diploma.

She was born a quadriplegic with cerebral palsy; the education system at the time wasn't capable of handling her needs.

Back then, disabled kids "had to go through a special school," she said. "We had a special class.

"I had great teachers, but it's the way it was," she said.

She never earned her degree.

A lack of education and her disabilities didn't keep Braun from living her life. She married and became active in the community. She's on the Covington Human Rights Commission, a leader with Disabilities Coalition of Northern Kentucky Inc. and the Kentucky Self Advocates for Freedom. She rings the bell for the Salvation Army every Christmas season at the Kroger in Latonia.

Braun earned her degree through the Kenton County Adult Education Program administered in cooperation with Gateway Community and Technical College.

Beth Lea of Edgewood has volunteered to tutor Braun for the past five years. Lea said much of her work was finding accommodations.

"At first, she didn't have enlarged print," Lea said. "We ended up getting her a scribe because she is unable to write for any length of time and that made it difficult. She also had assistance with a calculator. Because of her eyesight, if she read the test she would tire out. We had her listen to the tapes of the test."

"She knew the material; we just had to come up with what would work. She would never give up."

"I would encourage anybody to go back to school - especially a disability person - they can do it," Braun said.

After Braun receives her degree, her church, Mother of God Parish in Covington, will hold a celebration for her.

As for that job in Frankfort, it's still there for her. But she will have to wait a little longer. On April 9, the day after Easter, Braun fell out of her wheelchair and broke the arm she uses to steer.

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