

Diversity, Equality & Inclusion

DEI Committee Friday Thoughts

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On Korean Day, We Remember Dr. Kang

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First of all, I am thankful that I have a chance to write this Friday Thoughts article. When I heard that the DEI committee wanted to celebrate Korean Day with a "Friday Thoughts" article, Dr. Young Woo Kang's remarkable life story immediately came to my mind. It is a story worth sharing. I believe his life journey—marked by resilience and a strong belief in fairness for people with disabilities—aligns with the DEI Committee's mission and values.

Dr. Young Woo Kang was born on January 6, 1944, in Yang-pyeong, Gyeong-gi Province. His early years were tough. He lost his father at 13 and a year later his vision due to a soccer injury. He was orphaned shortly afterwards when his mother and sister also passed away.

In the 1960s, people with disabilities were banned from pursuing a college education in South Korea. Dr. Kang challenged the system to pursue his education at Yonsei University. He later earned his Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh with a scholarship from the Rotary Foundation.

It was quite impressive that Dr. Kang became the first Korean with a disability to earn a Ph.D. and to hold important roles in Illinois as a university professor and director of special education. In 2002, President George W. Bush appointed him as a policy advisor to the National Council on Disability, a significant achievement for a Korean immigrant in the United States.

Even while battling pancreatic cancer, Dr. Kang bravely faced his mortality. Before passing away on February 23, 2012, he generously donated \$250,000 to the Rotary Foundation. Dr. Kang's legacy stands as a testament to perseverance, determination and selflessness in advocating for people with disabilities.

Sharing Dr. Young Woo Kang's story in this "Friday Thoughts" is an important reminder of the human spirit's endurance and unwavering commitment to fairness, particularly for those facing disabilities. His story inspires us to confront our own challenges with determination, drawing strength from his unwavering resolve. Dr. Kang often said that he found

God's blessing from his disabilities. Because of his impaired vision, he was able to understand and help many people with disabilities in their lives.

My personal encounter with Dr. Kang's impact occurred when he visited my university and delivered an inspiring speech. His words sparked courage within me, motivating me to take a risk and pursue a job opportunity in the United States.

Dr. Kang's legacy endures through his wife's continued volunteer work and fundraising efforts within his foundation for those living with disabilities. Her dedication reflects the lasting impact Dr. Kang had on those around him, ensuring his advocacy for equality and support for individuals with disabilities continues to inspire others.

Resources:

<https://www.charitynavigator.org/ein/822906006>

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0426981/>

<https://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/2012/022912>

<https://www.munsterrotary.com/stories/young-woo-kang-died-on-february-23rd>

<https://www-origin.abebooks.com/book-search/author/young-woo-kang>

Goodwin Living DEI Committee: Statement of Purpose: Educate, Embrace and Empower team members, residents, members* and all served by Goodwin Living to support Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

Goodwin Living DEI Committee Desired Outcome: The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Committee (DEI) will seek open and honest communication and collaboration that will inform and celebrate the age, culture, ethnicity and sexual orientation of team members, residents, members* and all served by Goodwin Living without bias.

*Members include Priority Club members and Goodwin Living at Home.

Questions or comments? Please contact us DEI@GoodwinLiving.org