

**Minnesota Project Innovation Dillon Persistence Award-
*Di Goodwin's Acceptance Speech***

Good evening fellow Innovators! It's great to be among you.



First, I'd like to thank Pat Dillon and MPI for supporting us in applying for an SBIR grant—happily, it paid off. They've really been a key part of our team, providing a grant reviewer, a CPA, and market research support. The trainings they've held with SBIR staff also helped immensely.

Next, I'd like to thank the Blue Sky Designs team—they're great!!! Kevin and Sherry are very talented designers; and Allison does a bang up job organizing focus groups and crunching data.

At Blue Sky Designs, the heart and soul of our vision is about opening up new possibilities to people with disabilities. Collectively, we've worked with over two thousand individuals, developing custom solutions for them. If anyone has taught me anything about patience and persistence, they have.

You've heard of the patience of Job? Well, think of the patience of Bob, a man with CP who uses a wheelchair and has gone on 36 wilderness trips. On all those trips, he has had to wait for someone else to help him get into the tent, and out of the rain or away from mosquitoes. With the prototypes we developed in Phase 1, he was, at last, able to get in and out independently.

Pat came to one of our focus groups, and it demonstrated to us yet another niche market our product really works well for: women in dresses and heels! Pat had no problem getting in and out of our tents.

My first encounter with Pat was a lesson in patience... I went to her, 4 weeks prior to a submission deadline, chomping at the bit with 3 or 4 great ideas. I wanted to get input as to which one might have the best chance. Instead, she stopped me in my tracks and said, "Slow down, Dianne... There's no way you can put something together in 4 weeks. There'll be another chance in 6 months"... That... was a lesson in patience...

I'd like to thank my partner, family, friends and coworkers for their patience with me at grant-writing time. You've heard of Just-in-Time Engineering? I'm the Queen of Just-in-Time Grant writing.

As for persistence, when I think about what all of us here go through in the SBIR process, I see us as a bunch of beavers... taking one bite at a time... cutting down trees both large and small, making what looks like a mess... but... in the end, we're building one darn beautiful thing after another...

Keep on dreaming, keep on building—the world will be better off for it. Thanks and have a great evening....

