

**Louise Maxwell started Soulful Encounters as an Internet dating service for the disabled. What she ended up with is so much more** BY KYMWOLFE



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# GOOD FOR THE SOUL

LOUISE MAXWELL INITIALLY LAUNCHED Soulful Encounters as a dating site for the medically disabled and differently abled, but it has quickly evolved into a unique online community that goes far beyond the role of matchmaker. It is a support system for people (and their parents) with disabilities; it's a forum where members can get expert advice from psychologists, pastors, lawyers and other professionals; and it is a virtual meeting place where people can find friendship—and, in some cases, romance.

That's what happened for Londoner Bonnie Maas, who met Ed Allen through Soulful Encounters and spent this past Christmas with him in Walton, Indiana. Maas, 49, who has multiple sclerosis, had previously been on regular dating sites and says, "I met some really nice

guys, but there was no chemistry." She joined Soulful Encounters early in 2007 and 50-year-old Allen, who has a heart condition, joined in February. The two began to chat and email back and forth, but it wasn't until Allen went on vacation during the summer that Maas realized how much she looked forward to his messages.

"I missed him, so I sent him a message: 'Just wondering, did you fall off the face of the earth or what?'" she chuckles. "I found out later he was rock climbing and in fact there were a couple of times where he almost did fall off!" Once Allen returned the two began to phone each other and that led to an invitation to visit in August.

"I've always wanted to swim with the dolphins, and Ed suggested I check out the Indianapolis Zoo because