



8001 Excelsior Drive, Suite 200
Madison, Wisconsin 53717

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 136
Madison, WI



Independence

Easterseals Wisconsin Newsletter
Winter/Spring 2020

AmeriCorps Helps Honor Veterans

Since the very first Veterans Family Camp was held in April of 2009, AmeriCorps members have been front and center in ensuring the success of this great program. Offered free of charge, Veterans Family Camp has provided a weekend break to nearly 1500 veterans and their family members. The sessions are designed to give families time to reconnect with each other and network with other veterans during a fun, relaxing weekend with a variety of planned and optional activities. An AmeriCorps member serves as the program coordinator and a combination of AmeriCorps members, general staff, and volunteers work together to make sure everyone attending has a great time.

The 2019 fall session served 21 veterans and 77 family members. Families were able to spend some quality time together, veterans bonded over their shared experiences, and friendships were made.

A special thank you to Namyun Kil, PhD, from UW La Crosse, who conducted a Forest Therapy program Saturday morning which was enjoyed by many of the families.

The weekend included pumpkin carving, minute-to-win-it games, adventures on the ropes course, and the Saturday night Karaoke Party!

Also on Saturday night, four veterans were recognized for their service and received Quilts of Valor. This is always a high point of the weekend and it was wonderful that the veterans honored were surrounded by loved ones and fellow veterans.

Our next Veterans Family Camp will be held May 1-3, 2020 and spots are filling up quickly! If you're interested in registering, we'd love to have you join us. Veterans of all ages, abilities, and years of service are welcome. We're counting down the days until the spring weekend!

Registration information can be found online at www.eastersealswisconsin.com. There is no cost to attend.



"The camp has had a real impact on my family. It has given us a chance to spend time together without worrying about finances. It has also been a great experience meeting other vet families. We hope to have a chance to attend again! Thank you to everyone that makes this possible!"

– Veteran



John Van Wie, In Memorium



John C. Van Wie, age 74, of Wisconsin Dells, passed away on January 16, 2020. He was a beloved, long-time member of the Easterseals Wisconsin Board of Directors.

"It would be hard to think of anyone who has done more for Easterseals and for our camps," says Christine Fessler, Easterseals Wisconsin CEO. "John came on the board in 2004, serving as Board Chairman and Chair of the Camp & Respite Committee. Through the Van Wie Charitable Foundation, and through his countless volunteer hours, he made possible many, many major projects at camp, leaving an impact for generations of campers to come. As a veteran himself, the Veterans Family Camp was very special to him and he never failed to attend and address the veterans at each session, with a message straight from his heart."



Since 2002, the Gregory C. Van Wie Charitable Foundation, with John's guidance, has contributed over \$2.4 million to Camp Wawbeek major projects, starting with the construction of the beautiful Van Wie Residence Hall for Women and Girls, followed by the Dining Hall remodel, new Pool, Menomoni Cabin remodel, new Climbing Tower & Ropes Course upgrade and, most recently, a contribution to make the Boys Dorm Bathroom remodel possible in 2020.

Easterseals Wisconsin extends its sincere sympathy to John's wife, Joanne, and his entire family. He was a kind and wonderful man (and a very amusing storyteller!) who will be dearly missed.



Top: John (right) with fellow board member Chuck Buell, at the 2018 Easterseals Wisconsin Recognition Dinner, where the two were honored as Outstanding Volunteers.
Bottom: with Carissa Peterson, Vice President of Camp & Respite Services, at Winter Warm-Up.

ADMINISTRATION

Christine Fessler • President/CEO
cfessler@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.575.5465
Sandee Horn • Executive Assistant
shorn@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1449
Lorrie Greene • Technology Support Specialist
lgreene@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1567
James Ruehle • Camp & Office Administrative Assistant
jruehle@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1551

CAMP & RESPITE PROGRAMS

Carissa Peterson • Vice President, Camp & Respite Services
cpeterson@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.432.6268
Jamie Lloyd • Director, Respite Camp
jlloyd@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.254.2502
Alex Peters • Director, Camp Wawbeek
apeters@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.254.8319
Anna Korb • AmeriCorps Program Manager
akorb@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1397
Renita Link • Camp Medical Billing Specialist
dmarusek@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1372
Emily Mead • Camp Billing Assistant
emead@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1576

CLIENT ASSISTANCE

Jill Gretzinger • Coordinator, Outagamie Co. Disability HelpLine
jgretzinger@eastersealswisconsin.com • 920.832.0344

DEVELOPMENT

Rachel Reichhoff • Director, Development
rreichhoff@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1370
Cally Ehle • Director, Grants Management
cehle@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1484

FARM & VOCATIONAL SERVICES

Paul Leverenz • Vice President, FARM & Vocational Services
pleverenz@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.225.2394
Jeff Kratochwill • Lead Rural Rehabilitation Specialist
jkratochwill@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.279.9436
Ami Cooper • Rural Rehabilitation Specialist
acooper@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.225.1867
T Ellenbecker • Rural Rehabilitation Specialist
tellenbecker@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.279.9437
Paul Untiet • Rural Rehabilitation Specialist
puntiet@eastersealswisconsin.com • 715.347.4093
Julie Jensen • Self-Employment Services Specialist
jjensen@eastersealswisconsin.com • 920.360.0373
Melba Brown • Technical Assistant
mbrown@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1446

FINANCE

Pam Ivers • Chief Financial Officer
pivers@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1387
Linda Eby • HR Coordinator/Accounting Assistant
leby@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1380

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Stacey Murnighan • Director, Marketing & Communications
smurnighan@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1479
Mary Statz • Marketing & Development Specialist
mstatz@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1520

Easterseals Wisconsin
8001 Excelsior Drive, Suite 200
Madison, Wisconsin 53717

Easterseals News
New Staff



Jamie Lloyd joined Easterseals Wisconsin as the Respite Camp Director in August 2019. She started her journey at Respite Camp in May 2017 as a summer camp counselor, as a Camper Coordinator summer of 2018, and Program Director summer of 2019. Jamie has a degree in Special Education and is excited to apply the knowledge gained through her education and experiences at camp to her new role as Respite Camp Director. Jamie's favorite part of camp is seeing the campers build friendships with each other and staff, and trying new experiences with the support from those friendships.



Renita Link joined Easterseals Wisconsin in May 2019 and serves as the Camp Medical Billing Specialist. Renita grew up in Madison and has returned after 21 years. She formerly owned her own business in which she worked to access funding for children with disabilities to participate in water safety and swimming. She is excited to be a part of Easterseals and to continue her work with an organization that places an emphasis on offering the experience of camp to children and adults with disabilities.



James Ruehle joined Easterseals Wisconsin in April 2019 with a passion to create experiences and empower individuals through our programs. In his role of Camp & Office Administrative Assistant, James provides support in maintaining communication between campers, camp, and funding agencies while managing camper registration. A native of Iowa, James earned his M.A. in Business Communications from the University of Dubuque in 2012. Since then, he has worked in Behavioral Healthcare as well as in Management and Training Development, most recently in Denver.



Emily Mead joined Easterseals Wisconsin in June 2019 and serves as the Camp Billing Assistant. In this role, she is responsible for obtaining authorizations, invoicing, and various administrative duties around the Madison office. Emily earned a degree in medical billing through Madison College.

URGENT!
Vehicle Needed



When Easterseals Wisconsin Camps aren't in session (which is rare), senior camp staff are often on the road, visiting colleges and job fairs to recruit the best camp staff and AmeriCorps members. With 10 week-long summer sessions as well as 23 weekend sessions from September through May to staff, that is a lot of recruiting! Before March, we will visit 26 colleges and job fairs, traveling from Wisconsin to Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, and Indiana.

To do this important job safely, we are in desperate need of a new vehicle. We are looking for a 2016 or newer (and/or with 30K miles or fewer) vehicle. Preference is for a 4-door and transmission can be either automatic or manual.

Not only will this vehicle be used for recruitment, but it will also be put to use for various fundraising events, conventions, and community meetings for organizations such as the Kiwanis and Elks who do so much to support Easterseals.

If you're able to contribute financially to help us purchase an appropriate vehicle, or have a vehicle to donate that meets this criteria, please contact Carissa at 608.237.1575 or by email at cpeterson@eastersealswisconsin.com.

If you have a vehicle to donate that does not fit these requirements, you can still donate it to support Easterseals Wisconsin. Visit DonateACar.com to find out more.

Major Gifts

Major gifts are the largest gifts an organization receives. Studies have shown that on average, over 88% of all funds come from just 12% of donors. That 12% constitutes the donation from major gift contributors. A robust major giving program is a priority for the 2020 fiscal year. The Development department is asking for your assistance.

How can you help? Start by asking yourself a couple of basic questions: Do you have contacts in the business community, or friends/family who might share in your commitment to Easterseals Wisconsin? Would you mind reaching out to introduce a member of Easterseals staff? If so, you can help by arranging or suggesting appointments at local businesses or with local individuals who might have an alignment, interest, or proclivity to supporting Easterseals Wisconsin.

An alternative way of helping out is by serving as an Easterseals Wisconsin Ambassador, inviting potential donors to Starry Night, the kick-off event for the agency's Annual Campaign, which will be held March 10th in Madison.



Guests at Starry Night 2019, the kick-off event for the Easterseals Wisconsin Annual Campaign.

To learn more about helping to secure major gifts for Easterseals Wisconsin or becoming an Easterseals Wisconsin Ambassador, contact Rachel Reichhoff, Director of Development, at 608.237.1370. Rachel can also be reached by email at rreichhoff@eastersealswisconsin.com.

Exploring Job Options in Rural Wisconsin

Two of Easterseals Wisconsin's most successful programs –the FARM Program and Camp Wawbeek–are joining forces again to provide Exploring Job Options in Rural Wisconsin during Transition weekends at Camp. Activities related to all areas of agriculture and some career development activities, such as resume building, will be included.

The first of four planned weekends was held in October and was a great start to the program, introducing careers in fun ways, and providing the opportunity to visit Ski-Hi Fruit Farm. This orchard has been in business for over a century and continues to thrive.

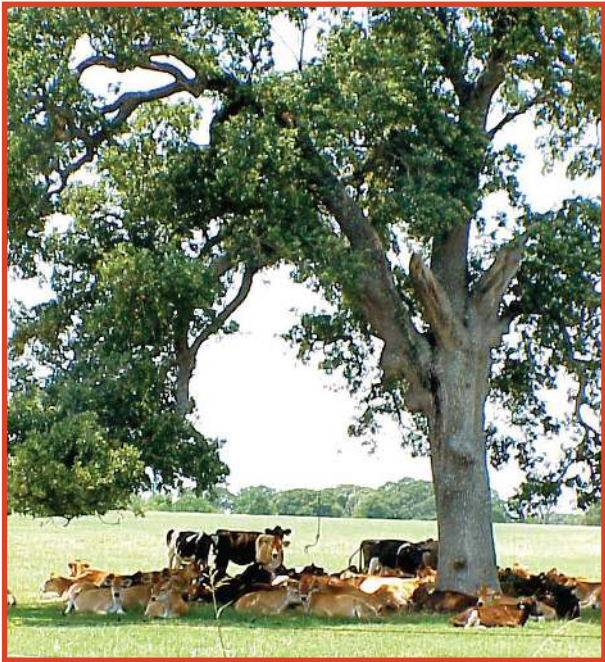
The campers enjoyed a tour of the facilities, seeing where the pastries such as apple pies, donuts, and turnovers are freshly made every day. They also learned about the history of the farm, had the opportunity to witness caramel apples being made, heard about how apple cider is made, and visited the warehouse where apples are sorted, as well as the cooler where apples and cider are stored.

After the tour, the campers enjoyed a delicious apple cider donut and went to the petting zoo, where they enjoyed meeting sheep, goats, ducks, ponies, a donkey, and even a zebra!



Easterseals FARM Program is excited for the opportunity to reach out to teachers, parents, and students with disabilities across the state and invites anyone with interest or questions about this innovative program to contact the class instructor, Ami Cooper, at acooper@eastersealswisconsin.com or by phone at 608.225.1867.

USDA Outreach Grant



The Easterseals Wisconsin FARM Program was awarded a USDA Socially Disadvantaged Outreach Grant in October to serve socially disadvantaged farmers over the next three years. The FARM staff will be partnering with the UW Extension with the long term goal of enhancing the profitability and sustainability of Hmong, veteran, and other socially disadvantaged current and beginning farmers in Wisconsin by providing outreach to help them access USDA programs. Agricultural education opportunities will be made possible through agricultural exploration classes, safety days, and targeted presentations. This project provides this population with the information and assistance necessary to access, engage, and follow through on participation in USDA programs.

The 2501 Program (also known as the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program) was created through the 1990 Farm Bill to help socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, and foresters, who have historically experienced limited access to USDA loans, grants, training, and technical assistance. The 2014 Farm Bill expanded the program's reach to veterans.

Winter Warm-Up THE KEG

The Keg & Patio
732 Oak Street • Wisconsin Dells
March 14, 2020 • 1:00 - 5:00

Winter Warm-Up is a fun, family-friendly event in Wisconsin Dells that is open to camp families, our Dells area friends, and anyone else who would like to join us! We offer free food (thanks to The Keg), a cash bar, raffles and games throughout the day, and music. Raffle tickets are only \$1 for 3, and we draw several winners each hour, so there are lots of chances to win!

All proceeds from this event support Easterseals Wisconsin Camps - Camp Wawbeek and Respite Camp.

Blizzard Blast!

The 32nd Annual Blizzard Blast, hosted by the Dane County Council of Snowmobile Clubs, was held at Rex's Innkeeper in Waunakee on Saturday, February 1. This fun, family-friendly event with food, raffles, and a live auction, is held in a different quadrant of Dane County each year and has raised over \$320,000 for Easterseals Wisconsin since 1988. This year's event raised just over \$10,000.



Our sincere thanks to the Dane County Council of Snowmobile Clubs for their terrific partnership over the years. Your generosity has made such a difference in the lives of so many!

Celebrity Basketball Experience!



Mark your calendars now! Some of your favorite Badger alumni players will be coming home to the Kohl Center to take part in the 3rd Annual Easterseals Wisconsin Celebrity Basketball Experience. Easterseals Board members Andy Crooks and Zach Morley are hard at work recruiting their former teammates to join them on the court and the day is shaping up to be another can't-miss family-friendly event. Along with the game, timeout giveaways, an appearance by Bucky, sideline commentary by Joe & Ebo, the possibility of some creative scoring, and halftime entertainment add to the fun.

The game, which features Badger football and hockey alumni along with their B-ball brethren, will be held on Sunday, April 5, 2020 at 3:00 pm at the Kohl Center in Madison. Tickets are just \$10 for adults and \$5 for anyone with a student ID or ages 8-18. Children ages 6 and under are free.

Prior to the game, former Badger Coach Gary Close will be conducting the Shot Dr. Skills Academy. This 90-minute clinic will give kids in grades 4-8 the opportunity to improve their balling skills. Cost is \$20, which includes a t-shirt and entry to the game. Pre-registration is required and space is limited, so sign up early!

For more information, to get your tickets, or to sign up for the Shot Dr. Skills Academy, visit www.eastersealswisconsin.com/tickets or call Rachel Reichhoff at 608.237.1370.

Visit www.EastersealsWisconsin.com for more details and to get your tickets.

Nursing Immersion Program



Katie Dowdy (right) at Easterseals Respite Camp.

"It was a really incredible experience," said Dowdy, a senior nursing student who plans to graduate in the spring. "Being able to learn from people on the front lines as well as the campers themselves was just a great opportunity."

Nursing 436: Summer Respite Camp Immersion for Undergraduate Nursing Students was created for Summer Term 2019 to address a nursing need. While 15 percent of the world's population lives with some form of disability, nursing students have little exposure to people with disabilities. Students in the six-week course did two weeks of online preparation, learning skills that they put into practice while working at camp for three weeks, and followed up with a one-week online wrap-up. Experienced camp nurse preceptors supervised the students.

"The summer respite immersion is a unique experience," said Kim Whitmore, assistant professor in the School of Nursing and master of public health faculty in the School of Medicine and Public Health. She used a Summer Term igniter grant to develop the course. "Nursing students typically don't get exposed to individuals with disabilities or respite care in their traditional nursing education. Plus, they are in a fun, relaxing camp setting, which makes it very special."

For three weeks this summer, Dowdy worked and lived at two different Easterseals Wisconsin camps in the Wisconsin Dells—Camp Wawbeek and Respite Camp. "Each week was a different experience and there was a unique feel at camp," she said. She worked with young children through older adults with varying needs. Dowdy met with campers and caregivers, reviewed paperwork, helped prepare and distribute medications and staffed the nursing station, where she saw everything from bee stings to situations that required a trip to the emergency room.

Article by Lisa Bauer at UW-Madison is used with permission and has been edited for space.
Link to full article: <https://news.wisc.edu/new-nursing-immersion-program-offers-students-meaningful-hands-on-experience-at-respite-camp/>

Dowdy has provided respite care before, but it was in chunks of 2 to 12 hours. At camp, it was her first time doing 24-hour care. "After that first week, I felt like I needed to sleep for a week," she said. "It really made me think about campers' families and caregivers and the importance of respite care."

"It really made me think about campers' families and caregivers and the importance of respite care."

The camp also taught her to pay more attention to accessibility—and advocate for it. "Even some of our hospital rooms are difficult to navigate in a wheelchair. Automatic doors, sinks and paper towel dispensers aren't a big deal for me, but they're really important things to consider when thinking about accessibility." Mostly, she learned from campers about handling unique needs and the many ingenious ways they manage their own care.

"The hope is that students in this course will develop a deep understanding of the complexities of caring for someone with a disability, but also understand the importance of maintaining quality of life and adapting the environment to ensure accessibility," Whitmore added. "We also hope students develop an appreciation for the importance of respite care for family caregivers. For many, the week their loved ones are at camp is the only vacation they have all year."

The course is currently only offered as a summer immersion experience, but Whitmore hopes to expand it and give students the opportunity to work at the camps on weekends during the school year or participate in a summer internship.

"When you are taking care of people in a hospital, it's a very small view of their life," she said. "When I got to see the campers going swimming, making friends, singing at the talent show, it made me realize that this is why I got into nursing in the first place—to help people enjoy their lives and be well."



+ Pancake Breakfast



Combining two popular events (Fall Sprawl and Pancake Breakfast) into one, the inaugural Run, Ramble & Roll + Pancake Breakfast was held on Sunday, October 6th, at Camp Wawbeek. The weather was great and about 50 people participated in the 5K run/walk/roll on the accessible course that winds through the 400 wooded acres of Camp Wawbeek and Respite Camp. Access Ability Wisconsin provided Action Trackchairs so everyone could use the course who wanted to participate.

The Pancake Breakfast, in its 27th year, was held in the dining hall at Camp Wawbeek and was busy all morning. Drawings were held for items that were generously donated by local businesses, the Canepa Dancers performed (thank you, Bertie!), and a bounce house, donated by Martens True Value in Reedsburg, was a big hit with the kids. Thank you so much to our volunteers for helping to make Run, Ramble & Roll + Pancake Breakfast possible, with special thanks to the Wilmot Key Club, the Gray Family, and Robin Buerki.

Join us October 4, 2020 for our next RRR+P!

Camp Nebagamon Scholarship Fund

The Camp Nebagamon Scholarship Fund supports tuition scholarships at non-profit summer camps that offer specialized recreation and supports for children and teens who experience poverty and disability.

For over 30 years, Camp Wawbeek campers have benefited from funding provided by Camp Nebagamon. Through Camp Nebagamon Scholarship Fund (CNSF) board and alumni fundraising efforts, the CNSF has increased the level of camperships provided to youth with disabilities to attend Wawbeek. In 2019, the CNSF tuition scholarship provided 14 full camperships to low-income children with disabilities.

Founded in 1947 by Muggs Lorber and administered by Nardie and Sally Lorber Stein for more than 50 years, the Scholarship Fund is a growing force for good among alumni and friends of Camp Nebagamon, a boys camp that has been operating in northwestern Wisconsin since 1929. Their goal is not to determine who is the best athlete or canoeist or artist. Rather, their goal for every camper is that s/he enjoys participating, learns skills, achieves competency, and feels a sense of accomplishment.

Easterseals Wisconsin is grateful for the support that the Camp Nebagamon Scholarship Fund has provided throughout the years.



Thank you, Camp Nebagamon for making outdoor fun and new experiences at Camp Wawbeek possible for so many campers over the last 30 years!