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Avenues to Understanding



The free Educator's Guide is available to download on the Education page of the Easterseals Wisconsin website.

Visit www.EastersealsWisconsin.com

Avenues to Understanding is a disability awareness program created by Easterseals Wisconsin and offered free of charge to individuals, homeschooling families, public and private schools, early childhood programs, and faith and community-based organizations throughout the state.

The Educator's Guide provides an expanding knowledge of disabilities and disability issues for young people as they age. Young children will be presented with an introduction to disabilities, will learn about what they are, and will be helped to look for similarities rather than differences when meeting someone with a disability.

Older kids will begin to explore the architectural and attitudinal barriers that may provide stumbling blocks to integration for people with disabilities and look at them in conjunction with their own need to fit in.

High school students are encouraged to explore their communities, to look at how people with disabilities are regarded and portrayed in various media, and to consider how people with disabilities might be affected by the same real world challenges they themselves are facing: independent living, college, and jobs.

easterseals
Wisconsin



Independence

Easterseals Wisconsin Newsletter
Winter/Spring 2021

HelpLine Marks 25 Years

"Loretta," says Jill Gretzinger, Coordinator of the Outagamie County Disability HelpLine, "is a bit of a mystery." No one knows why Loretta K. Ricker chose to leave a substantial amount of her estate to Easterseals Wisconsin (ESW). At the time of her death, her nephew noted that, to his knowledge, no members of their family had a disability and he knew of no prior relationship with Easterseals. The mystery of why Loretta chose Easterseals Wisconsin has never been solved, but in the 25 years since her bequest was received, thousands of people in the Fox Valley have benefited from her wonderful legacy.

When ESW was first notified of the bequest, which specifies that it benefit people in Outagamie County, we hired a consulting firm to do a needs survey of county service providers and families to determine how we could best be of help. It was decided a one-stop shop to get information and assistance about disability-related services would be a good use of the funds. Jill Gretzinger was then hired to develop the newly named Outagamie County Disability HelpLine. Over the years, HelpLine services have adapted as community needs and available government services have changed. "I like to think Loretta's gift has given us the flexibility to offer needed programs in gap areas," says Gretzinger.

Almost 8,000 individuals have called the HelpLine since the Appleton office was established in 1996. Outagamie County clients of our Camp and FARM programs have benefitted along with another 1200 clients who have received over \$300,000 in assistance to purchase disability-related equipment. A parents group, a car seat program, and other programs have added an additional 2,800 people who have benefitted locally from Ms. Ricker's gift.

Other programs over the years have included: a teen peer group, a social/recreation program and a collaborative music program for kids with autism, accessible parking education in the Valley, the Guardian Support Program, helping build a Universal Playground in Appleton, working with and serving as a fiscal agency for a local Lions group for the expansion of their loan closet and collaborating to get ramps to people who need them. The HelpLine has even collaborated on a local Wheelchair Wash!

Based on the way the bequest is set up, it will continue to be a gift for thousands of people in Outagamie County over the next 25 years, truly demonstrating how a legacy gift is one that keeps on giving, making the lives of thousands of people better.

**Congratulations to Jill & the HelpLine
on a job well done!**

To learn more about Legacy Gifts, contact Rachel Reichhoff, Director of Development, at rreichhoff@eastersealswisconsin.com



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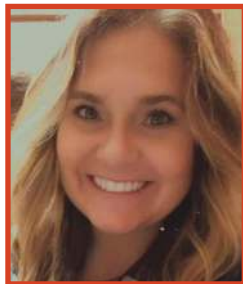
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Easterseals Wisconsin News

New Board Members



Mandy Ellenbecker's introduction to Easterseals Wisconsin (ESW) is tied to her uncle Sylvester "Skip" Ellenbecker and his memorial golf outing. After taking part for a few years, Mandy joined the event-planning committee. She was surprised and flattered when asked to join the ESW Board and looks forward to being more immersed in all of the amazing things ESW brings to so many and helping to expand exposure in central Wisconsin and the northwoods. Mandy, who was born, raised, and currently resides in Athens, is the VP of Funding for Aqua Finance, where she has worked for 16 years.



Alan Kaltenberg was first introduced to Easterseals Wisconsin through the FARM Program, when (now retired) Rural Rehabilitation Specialist Bruce Whitmore evaluated his farm and made some suggestions for changes and improvements that made Alan's Arlington farming operation safer and tasks easier. Alan has shared his experiences with the FARM Program at ESW events such as Starry Night and Blizzard Blast. He is very active in his community and his church and is looking forward to working with an organization that he knows can help so many people.



Nehomah Thundercloud is the Executive Director of Education for the Ho-Chunk Nation. She grew up in Black River Falls, was a Rotary Exchange Student to Bacolod City, Philippines, and holds degrees from Dartmouth College and UW-Stout. Through her work with Ho-Chunk Gaming Wisconsin Dells, Nehomah had the opportunity to attend several ESW events and participate in activities at Camp Wawbeek during the winter months. "I am impressed by Easterseals Wisconsin," she says. "I have family and friends who are thankful for the opportunities ESW has provided them, as campers and as parents. I look forward to learning more and offering my help in expanding the ESW community."

New Staff



Kim Feiner started at Easterseals Wisconsin in 2020 as the HR Coordinator/Accounting Assistant. As a former Med Flight dispatcher, Kim approaches challenges with critical thinking and problem solving skills. She served 19 years as a volunteer EMT and 7 years as a volunteer firefighter. Kim and her husband, Rick, live in Arena. When not in the office, you can find Kim on her Can-Am Spyder, riding country roads and exploring the Wisconsin countryside. She's excited to be working with the great group at Easterseals Wisconsin.

COVID continues to impact many of our annual fundraising events, including Blizzard Blast and the Celebrity Basketball Experience. We're excited to work with our sponsors and participants to make these events better than ever in 2022.

Winter Warm-Up

THE KEG

EAT - DRINK - RELAX

The Keg & Patio
732 Oak Street • Wisconsin Dells
March 13, 2021 • Noon - 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 music, free food (thanks to The Keg), a cash bar, and raffles and games throughout the day. 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 Camp Wawbeek and Wisconsin Elks/Easterseals Wisconsin Respite Camp.

Please check our website for event updates and possible cancellation due to Covid-19.



Guests enjoy a day out at Winter Warm-Up 2020



Sporting Clays

After much discussion and research on safe COVID-19 practices, the Blankenheim Family of Companies Sporting Clays Event benefiting Easterseals Wisconsin, held its inaugural shoot on September 29, 2020, at Milford Hills Hunt Club in Johnson Creek. Eighteen teams from across Wisconsin took part. It was an opportunity new to the organization and provided a chance to connect with new faces and old friends. The event raised just over \$19,000 in its first year. A resounding success!

Our thanks to Eric Blankenheim for his generous sponsorship of the event and to our other sponsors: KleenMark, Select One Mortgage, First Business Bank, TR McKenzie, Wisconsin Financial, and Ohio National Financial Services,

Teams included: Zorn Compressor & Equipment, JM Brennan, State Bank of Cross Plains, Sensational Stems, Maas Home Improvements, Miller DJ Service, Clay Slayers, the Tancill Investment Group, Hausmann-Johnson Insurance, Freedom Shooters, Lyon's Lannon Stone Circle Longshots, and Realtime Utility Engineers.



Thank you to everyone who joined us for this great new event! We look forward to working with all of you again!

Linda Eby Retires



*Good Luck,
Linda,
enjoy your
retirement!!*

Linda Eby, who started with Easterseals Wisconsin in 2008, retired at the end of September, 2020. She served as the HR Coordinator/Accounting Assistant.

Linda's terrific sense of humor made working with her a great joy, and the office will not be the same without her.

Thank you, Linda, for all that you did for Easterseals Wisconsin.

We will miss you!

Lyle Schlomer



FARM Program client Lyle Schlomer worked hard to succeed in the agricultural industry. His success hasn't come easily. When he was two years old, he lost his leg in a farm accident. He has worked hard and followed his dreams, even getting his pilot's license. His heart, though, was always on the farm.

Watch and listen as he shares his story about how the FARM Program has made his job a bit easier with assistive technology and equipment adaptations:

www.EastersealsWisconsin.com/lyle

*A smiling camper,
a self-sufficient businessperson,
an independent farmer,
re-energized caregivers...*

*Your monthly gift
can help make
all these possible!*



AmeriCorps Leadership Team

AmeriCorps provides four key leadership members who serve throughout the school year at Easterseals Wisconsin. Our leadership team provides purposeful support to our camp community through different avenues of service. These members serve in the capacity of Volunteer Coordinator, Camp Outreach Liaison, Transitions Coordinator, and Veterans Coordinator.

For the 2020-2021 year, these positions are held by:

- Hayley Curtsinger, Volunteer Coordinator
- Maggie Prokosch, Camp Outreach Liaison
- Kristin Witz, Transitions Coordinator
- KJ Newkirk, Veterans Coordinator

To learn more about AmeriCorps opportunities with Easterseals Wisconsin, contact Anna Korb:
akorb@eastersealswisconsin.com



Hayley Curtsinger



Maggie Prokosch



Kristin Witz



KJ Newkirk

Making a monthly gift to Easterseals Wisconsin can make a significant difference in the lives of our Wisconsin neighbors with disabilities.

Planning an amount - \$1 a day, \$10 a week (or more!) - makes giving easier and, over time, truly makes the life of another, who has turned to Easterseals Wisconsin for help, better.

We hope you'll pledge to make this commitment in 2021.



To set up your account, visit:
www.EastersealsWisconsin.com
Click on the

Give Monthly

button under
Donations/Donate Online/Donate Now

Once your account is created, you can freely manage your monthly donation. Choose how often you'd like it to recur, pause payments, or cancel at any time.

 **easterseals**
Wisconsin

All abilities. Limitless possibilities.

Veterans Family Camp

"You signed on the same dotted line we all did." This is one of the most impactful statements Sergeant Don MacLeod, a Marine Corps veteran, has ever heard during the nine years he's attended Veterans Family Camp, a weekend retreat for veterans held twice a year at Easterseals Wisconsin Camps in Wisconsin Dells.

The man was walking with a cane and Don could tell he'd endured significant injuries during his time serving in the military. Don enlisted in 1986, served during Desert Storm, and was later honorably discharged in 1992. He never felt he could hold a candle to those who would share at the roundtable discussions about their experiences in the service. Most of the veterans he has met at camp suffer from PTSD. Don was never in a war zone, had never fired a shot during combat, and had always felt he wasn't quite the hero the others were.

The man with the cane said to him, "Look...you signed the same dotted line we all did. Just because you didn't go into combat doesn't mean your service meant any less." Don was honored by the heartfelt words his comrade shared with him that day. He realized that if that remark would have been made by a civilian, the impact would not have been the same. He would have probably just shrugged it off and moved on. But this was different. He said he knew then that this camp was something special.

Veterans Family Camp, which is offered without cost to veterans and their families, relies on donations from the community. Since its inception in 2009, nearly 1,500 veterans and family members have attended. Camp 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.

Easterseals Wisconsin's partnership with AmeriCorps makes possible the Veterans Coordinator (VC) position. In this role, the AmeriCorps member serves as the community outreach liaison. The VC is responsible for conducting campership mailings in search of funding, and coordinating with veteran groups for recruitment. They also coordinate Easterseals Wisconsin staff and volunteers to ensure that camp runs smoothly and everyone attending has a great time.

Don's favorite part, and what he looks most forward to each session, is the quality time he spends with his family. From nature walks to taking a trip on the Original Wisconsin Ducks Boat Tours to challenging his son on the high ropes course, he cherishes every minute. And because the camp is hosted at Easterseals Wisconsin Camps, an inclusive and accessible 400-acre camp for children and adults with



The MacLeod Family with Cyndi Hemmer (far right), former Veterans Camp Coordinator.

disabilities, his daughter who has disabilities, is able to enjoy an environment adapted for children just like her.

"One of the things my wife really appreciates is that the AmeriCorps members and camp counselors who volunteer for the Veterans Family Camp weekends are trained to care for children with disabilities. It allows us to participate in activities like the adults' dinner and Quilts of Valor ceremony held on Saturday night. We can relax and enjoy ourselves. We know our daughter is in very capable hands, and it gives her a break from us as well!"

Over the years, Don and his family have come to love and support the mission of Easterseals Wisconsin Camps. That appreciation led to a desire to give back and, as a family, they enjoy participating in service projects that benefit other campers. The family has built benches and flower boxes. One year, they noticed the TV in their cabin was broken and took it upon themselves to purchase and install a new one so that future campers could enjoy it as they had.

When he recommends the camp to other veteran families, he always says, "Why not give it a try? It's free!" He shares with them how it has impacted his family, about the great friends they've made over the years, and the camaraderie between the veterans and their respective branches.

But he always tries to close the deal by telling them about the camp food. "The food is wonderful there! For the amount of people they serve – having been in the military – the bigger the group, the lousier the food gets. But not here! They don't slouch on the food at camp. It's always good!" Don's wife adds, "And the cookies! That's the hook!"

Our Amazing Easterseals Wisconsin Family!

Virtual 5K & Drive-Thru Pancakes

To keep everyone safe, we offered a virtual Run, Ramble, & Roll along with a drive-thru Pancake Breakfast. We had a great turnout for the 5K run/walk, that was open for participants between September 27th and October 10th. Participants joined us from Chicago to Green Bay, Florida, and everywhere in between! Virtual participants received a t-shirt (pets who were signed up even received a bandana!), a playlist to listen to as they walked, rolled, or ran, and were also offered the opportunity to sign up for a time to visit camp and check out the trails for their stroll.



We didn't see as many people as we usually do for our pancake breakfast, but really appreciated those who took the time to drive through and pick up a hot pancake breakfast with all of the fixings. Thank you to our major sponsors – Bank of Wisconsin Dells, Holiday Wholesale, and Mary Krall – along with everyone else who supported these events to help make our camps happen!



New Transport

After several months of fundraising efforts and lots of donations we were able to purchase a new transit bus for camp! A huge THANK YOU to all who helped us spread the word about this need and to all who gave generously to make this become a reality! Your support is vital to the continuation of services and programs we provide to people with disabilities throughout the Badger state and we are so thankful for each of you.

Response to Urgent Appeal



Thank you so much to everyone who has continued to help us financially during these unprecedented times. Your kindness has meant the world to us!

Visit About Us / Media Center on our website and scroll down to view our Summer / Fall 2020 Newsletter to read about our many event sponsors who honored their sponsorships even after events were cancelled. Our supporters are the best!

It was a wonderful response," says Mary Statz, Marketing & Development Specialist for Easterseals Wisconsin, who manages the agency's Direct Mail Program. "And I found it incredibly touching."

A special mailing, describing the urgent need for funds to help our programs in a year when most of our fundraising events had to be scaled back to virtual events or cancelled altogether, went out in July to about 1,500 past donors. "Our goal was to raise \$5,000, an amount we surpassed within just a few days," says Statz. "And, in total, more than \$32,000 was raised.

"Rachel (Reichhoff, Director of Development), Stacey (Murnighan, Director of Marketing, who spread the appeal on social media) and I were all so excited by the response – emailing each other with daily totals and noting gifts from people we knew personally. I've managed the Direct Mail Program for more than 20 years. This mailing felt different, though, because we knew so many people everywhere were struggling, some financially, and some with other effects of the pandemic. It was difficult to send the mailing out because we knew so many were in need – should we even ask our donors for help? When we made the decision to move forward with it, it was so moving to have so many of our friends – so many members of the Easterseals Wisconsin family – rally around us. Just incredibly heart-warming. We're all so grateful!"