



Easter Seals Wisconsin

101 Nob Hill Road, Suite 301
Madison, Wisconsin 53713

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Independence

The newsletter of Easter Seals Wisconsin
Winter/Spring 2015

"Off-Season" at Easter Seals Wisconsin Camps

While the summer season at Camp Wawbeek and Respite Camp are consistently busy for thirteen weeks with staff training and week-long camp sessions, both camps operate year-round, offering weekend and specialty sessions as well as facility rentals.

Weekend Sessions

From September through May, Respite Camp offers at least two weekend sessions each month. Camp Wawbeek also holds specialty sessions from Fall through Spring for Adults, Youth, Transition Team, and Young Adults with High Functioning Autism. Cold weather activities such as sledding and snowfort-building replace time in the swimming pool and are added to indoor games and craft activities. Campers love having the opportunity to catch up with friends they made over the summer and trips to Wisconsin Dells area attractions like Knuckleheads and Chalet Bowling are also popular.

Veterans Family Camp

In September and May, Camp offers Veterans Family Camp weekends. Veterans of all ages attend, enjoying family time and time with other veteran families. The ropes course is very popular with this group and many area attractions, including the Original Wisconsin Ducks, Dells Boat Tours, and Tommy Bartlett, have generously opened their doors to this group with no charge.

Interested in renting our great facilities for your group? Contact Ellen Rischette at 608.237.1979.



Our Wisconsin Dells camps offer year-round fun.

Photo by adamvegas

Rentals

When Camp isn't in session, its wonderful facilities are available for businesses, organizations and community groups to rent. Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts have earned badges here, corporate leadership teams have done team-building weekends, organizations have offered retreats and many families have chosen our camps for reunions.

Because all facilities are accessible, planners know that no one in their group will be unable to attend or join in activities because of barriers. We have several buildings to choose from to provide sleeping and meeting areas, and kitchens are available. Our 400 wooded acres offer lots of outdoor options and we also have an indoor gym. Wisconsin Dells, with its many attractions and restaurant choices, is just minutes away.

Blizzard Blast

February 7, 2015 • 4:00 – 10:00 pm
The Red Mouse • Pine Bluff

The 2015 Blizzard Blast, hosted by the Dane County Council of Snowmobile Clubs, will be held at the Red Mouse (3738 County Road P; Pine Bluff) and features a chili cook-off with celebrity judging panel. Tickets are just \$20 per person and include admission, raffle entry, chili and soup dinner, beer and soda.

We'll have music and karaoke from Tourdot Tunes. Join us for great auction items, bucket raffles and hourly door prizes in support of Easter Seals programs. Top prize is \$1000. Tickets can be purchased through Easter Seals Wisconsin or through any Dane County snowmobile club. For more information, contact Easter Seals Wisconsin at 608.237.1370.

- 4:00 – 6:00 PM Chili Cook-off featuring celebrity judges
- 4:00 – 7:30 PM Silent Auction, Bucket Raffles & Door Prizes
- 4:00 – 8:30 PM Tourdot Tunes DJ & Karaoke
- 5:00 – 7:00 PM Chili & Soup Dinner, free beer & soda
- 8:00 PM \$1,000 Top Prize Raffle Drawing!

We hope to see you there!





Nanc Howard Retires

On September 23, about 100 family, friends, board members and current and past co-workers gathered to honor Nanc Howard as she retired from Easter Seals Wisconsin. There was abundant laughter as stories were told and memories were shared celebrating Nanc's 46 years of service. Congratulations, Nanc, and thank you!

Nanc Howard, left, and Easter Seals Wisconsin President/CEO Christine Fessler share a laugh over one of the gifts Nanc received from her co-workers and members of the Board of Directors at her retirement party.

Easter Seals Wisconsin Welcomes New Staff Members



Kim Boyer joins Easter Seals as the Director of Marketing & Communications. After graduating from Purdue University with a degree in Public Relations, Kim returned to the Chicago suburbs to work for her family's business as the Marketing Director. Kim was President of the local chamber of commerce, where she realized her love of helping out her community. Joining Easter Seals has given her the chance to keep giving back to the community while continuing to work in the marketing field.



Ami Cooper graduated from UW-River Falls with a degree in Agricultural Business and started working with the Easter Seals FARM Program as an AmeriCorps intern in 2012. As she learned more about the program, she came to love what they do. Ami grew up on her family's Registered Holstein dairy farm and always wanted to stay in agriculture. She is excited to have the opportunity to do just that and to help other farmers at the same time.



Maggi Earle joined the Easter Seals Wisconsin team in September as the Administrative Office Assistant. A graduate of the University of Maryland-College Park with a degree in Family Studies, Maggi started her career in nonprofits working for Habitat for Humanity. She is excited to now be a part of Easter Seals, helping to change the lives of individuals with disabilities.



Tami Miller joins the staff as Executive Assistant, providing support to the President/CEO, Board of Directors, and Director of Development. Tami has a degree in Social Work from UW-Stevens Point. She has owned and operated an award-winning small business and has been a foster parent, victims advocate and a child abuse intervention and prevention caseworker. In her free time, Tami runs a homeless outreach organization in Madison. Working to help vulnerable people and populations is her passion and the reason Tami is excited to join Easter Seals.

ADMINISTRATION

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Ken Saville Vice President
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Steve Peotter

Peotter Elected Chairman of the Board

At the November, 2014 meeting of the Easter Seals Wisconsin Board of Directors, Steve Peotter was elected Chairman of the Board.

Steve remembers watching the annual Easter Seals telethon each year as a child and being impressed with the organization's mission to help people with disabilities. Wanting to help continue that mission, he began working with the organization as a volunteer fundraiser in 2007. In 2009, he joined the board.

A 1994 graduate of the UW-Madison School of Business, Steve is involved in his community on both a personal and professional level. He is the President and CEO of Oregon Community Bank and utilizes his expertise with non-profit organizations and the resources available to him at the bank to add value to his contributions to Easter Seals.

Steve and his wife, Kelly, live in Oregon with their three children, Olivia, Ella and Jack.



Eric Blankenheim

Blankenheim Joins Board of Directors

Eric Blankenheim has a long history with Easter Seals. While in college, he spent four summers as a counselor at Camp Wawbeek (where he met his wife, Dawn) and two more at an Easter Seals camp in Alaska.

And in 2007 his business, Blankenheim Services, an Appleton-based ergonomic and physical/occupational therapy company, became a sponsor of the Golf Outing for Kids. They've supported the event ever since.

Eric has owned and operated Blankenheim Services for 20 years. He has an undergraduate degree in Occupational Therapy and a graduate degree in Industrial Engineering, both from UW-Madison. He and Dawn have three children, Sophie, Quinn, and Audrey.

"I feel privileged to serve the Easter Seals community in a leadership role," says Eric, who believes that both his technical and business backgrounds will be a good fit with the board. "I'm committed to assisting Easter Seals Wisconsin in continuing their excellent work."



Paul Karch, above and right, with daughters Rachel (center) and Lydia, along with their family dog, Daisy, at the 2014 Fall Sprawl.

Karch Retires from Board

Paul Karch, who has served on the Easter Seals Wisconsin Board of Directors for 15 years, stepped down from the board at the November, 2014 meeting.

"Paul served for three years as Board Chairman, served as Treasurer, and as Chairman of the Camp, Nominating, Development and Fiscal/Personnel Committees, as well as serving on the Audit Committee – in other words, Paul did just about everything one could do to make a contribution to this organization, including serving as a Committee Liaison for Easter Seals, Inc., our national organization," says Christine Fessler, President/CEO of Easter Seals Wisconsin.

"He's also been a VIP since his term began, together with his family raising more than \$263,000," she added. "He has been a Golf Outing For Kids volunteer and, with his daughter Rachel, a regular participant in Fall Sprawl, Pancake Breakfast and Blizzard Blast. He has faithfully attended every Easter Seals event that time allowed, from Elks Days to building dedications to Donation Center events to Starry Nights and Recognition Dinners."

Steve Peotter, newly elected Chairman of the Board, spoke of Paul's enthusiasm, energy, wisdom and "relentless pursuit of answers to questions that he had." "When legends are told, some turn to dust and some turn to gold," Steve said, quoting Aristotle. "Paul Karch," Steve added, "will always be gold to Easter Seals Wisconsin."

Paul presented each of the staff and members of the board with framed photos of his three children as a reminder that Respite Camp had "given him his family back," explaining the enormous impact that the Respite program has had on his family.

Camp Wawbeek Mourns Dedicated Friend



Wanda Tompkins

Easter Seals Wisconsin lost a dear friend and long-time employee when Wanda Tompkins, who was a summer cook at Camp Wawbeek for more than 20 years, passed away in November.

"Wanda was such an integral part of camp; dedicated, hard-working and someone who always got the job done," says Ken Saville, Vice President of Program Development. "Her interaction with campers was great and her lasagna was the best. Camp just won't be the same without her!"

The entire Easter Seals Wisconsin family extends their sympathies to Wanda's family. She will be deeply missed.

Farm Program



USDA Renews AgrAbility of Wisconsin Grant

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently awarded a grant of \$180,000 per year for the next four years to University of Wisconsin, Cooperative Extension to fund AgrAbility of Wisconsin. Through direct education and on-site assistance, the project serves farmers throughout Wisconsin with injuries, disabilities, or illnesses that affect their ability to work safely and effectively.

A partnership of the UW Extension and Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM Program, AgrAbility offers information and assessment for modification and adaptation of farm equipment and operations, farmstead accessibility, and assistive technology while connecting farmers with disabilities to the resources that allow them to continue their rural lifestyle. The new four-year grant was effective September 1, 2014.

"I am pleased that we have been successful in our refunding proposal for Wisconsin AgrAbility," said Dr. Richard Straub, Project Director for AgrAbility. "Our program now will have been continuously funded for 28 years. We are proud to be one of the most productive programs nationally, serving over 40% of all farmers served by AgrAbility projects across the country. We have tremendously talented and dedicated staff that make this possible. I am proud of the service that we are able to provide to farmers with disabilities in order to help them maintain a productive life in a profession they love."

AgrAbility of Wisconsin estimates the number of farmers with disabilities in Wisconsin to be as many as 38,740. To date, AgrAbility has worked with nearly 2,500 farmers, successfully allowing over 90 percent of them to continue farming. In 2013-14 alone, 526 farmers were served by the FARM Program. Since Wisconsin agriculture generates \$88.3 billion in economic activity and one out of every five jobs in the state, it is important that farming remains a viable occupation.

To learn more about how AgrAbility and Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM Program help farmers and their families continue to farm safely and successfully, contact Melba Brown at 608.237.1372 or email her at mbrown@eastersealswisconsin.com.

(Story by Hannah Gerbitz, AgrAbility of Wisconsin Outreach Specialist; used with permission.)



Jeff Kratochwill, Lead Rural Rehabilitation Specialist for the Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM Program, helps farmers find ways to modify and adapt farm equipment and practices so that they can continue to farm after a disabling accident or illness.

Donation Center



To learn more about raising funds for Easter Seals and for your school, team or non-profit organization, email us at dcenter@eastersealswisconsin.com

Savers Shoppers will Learn More about Easter Seals

Easter Seals Wisconsin staff and clients will be visiting Savers stores in Madison and Eau Claire soon to tell customers about the relationship between the two organizations. Check the DonateESW.com website for the dates and come to the stores to learn more.

Bring along a bag of clothes or other small household items to donate. Your donation will benefit Easter Seals Wisconsin and you will receive a discount coupon from Savers, truly a win/win for everyone.

If you are not able to make it to a Savers store but would like to help Easter Seals by donating your gently-used clothing or household goods, call 877.208.5109 or visit the website for drop-off locations or to schedule a free pickup at your home.

Recognition Dinner



"Difference-Makers" Honored

The 2014 "Difference Makers" were honored at the Easter Seals Wisconsin Recognition Dinner, held October 14 in Madison. These individuals, groups and businesses have inspired others and made outstanding contributions to the disability community and to Easter Seals Wisconsin.

2014 Honorees

Bill Holley, Lifetime Achievement

Bill has worked with Easter Seals for three decades, serving on the Board of Directors and as its Chairman, raising money as a volunteer fundraiser, bringing new volunteers and supporters to Easter Seals and dreaming about how the agency can better serve people with disabilities. His hard work, vision and dedication have helped to create programs and services that have and will continue to change lives for thousands of children and adults with disabilities every single year in Wisconsin.

Bud Gussel, Lifetime Service

Bud has always believed in community service and has demonstrated that belief throughout his life. Easter Seals Wisconsin is just one of many organizations he has supported through the years. Countless campers and veterans have enjoyed fishing in his pond, which he keeps stocked and accessible for them.

Keith Posselt, Outstanding Volunteer

Seventeen years ago, the Easter Seals FARM Program was able to help Keith return to farming after a fall left him with a severe spinal cord injury, limiting his mobility. In turn, Keith has spent the last 17 years giving back. He organized the Calf Project to raise funds for the FARM Program and has taken part in other fund raisers as well. He also advocates for the program, encouraging other farmers to contact Easter Seals for help after a disabling accident or illness.

Savers, Outstanding Partner

Savers partners with more than 140 non-profit organizations nationwide and fortunately, here in Wisconsin, they have chosen to partner with us. That partnership, which began in 1997, has raised over \$2,000,000 to provide direct services to children and adults with disabilities across our state.



Front Row, left to right: Matt Kluender and Keith Posselt. Back Row, left to right: Bud Gussel, Bruce Rodger, John Van Wie (Bruce and John represented the Gregory C. Van Wie Charitable Foundation) Bill Holley, Jon Bernander (representing the Bank of Wisconsin Dells) and Tony Shumpert (representing Savers).

Gregory C. Van Wie Charitable Foundation, Outstanding Philanthropy

Before his death, Greg Van Wie took steps to leave a lasting legacy of helping others. The Gregory C. Van Wie Charitable Foundation honors his wishes and Camp Wawbeek has benefited tremendously from Greg's generosity and foresight. Over the years, the foundation has helped Camp Wawbeek grow, and kept it accessible and exciting for campers for future generations. They have been major contributors to the beautiful Gregory C. Van Wie Memorial Residence Hall, the state-of-the-art Camp Wawbeek Dining Hall and new waterpark-inspired Swimming Pool.

Matt Kluender, Personal Growth & Development

Matt, who has osteogenesis imperfecta (brittle bone disease), has always looked beyond his disability to see potential and has met challenges head on. He is active in his community and does what he can to encourage and empower others. Matt and several members of his family have volunteered countless hours at Easter Seals Camp Wawbeek over the last several years, helping with events, with camp clean-up and with general maintenance. They have also donated funds to send children from the Stevens Point area to both Camp Wawbeek and the Wisconsin Elks/Easter Seals Respite Camp.

Note: Sadly, Matt passed away on December 11, 2014 after suffering a stroke. He was an inspirational individual who made a difference in the lives of others. He will be missed.

Bank of Wisconsin Dells, Outstanding Corporate Support

The Bank of Wisconsin Dells has been connected to Easter Seals Wisconsin for many years. In 2007, after visiting Camp Wawbeek and impressed by the facilities and the programs offered there, Bank President Jon Bernander persuaded the board to assume a greater level of support. Each year since, they have served as the event sponsor for Golf Outing for Kids. "We're proud to have Camp Wawbeek and Respite Camp as part of our community," says Jon. "And we're pleased to have our name associated with them. There is very much a feeling of us all being good friends and good neighbors."

AmeriCorps

2014-15 Leadership Team



The AmeriCorps leadership team helps in areas of volunteer recruitment and coordination, outreach, Transitions Camp coordination, and Veterans Family Camp outreach and coordination. Their efforts help Easter Seals Wisconsin continue to build capacity by increasing the number of campers that attend our sessions.

A young camper prepares to try out the zipline at Veterans Family Camp.



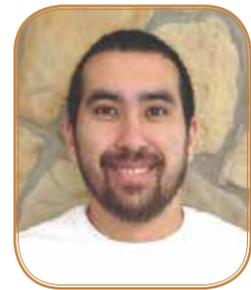
Cyndi Garza
AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator

Cyndi is thrilled to be serving her second term as the AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator. This is her 5th year working with Easter Seals Wisconsin Camps; prior to signing on with AmeriCorps, she worked as the Arts and Crafts Programmer, Female Dorm Coordinator, and as a weekend counselor. Cyndi hopes to involve more clubs and organizations with camp by encouraging them to do service projects and work as counselors. Camp is very important to Cyndi and she enjoys sharing new experiences with volunteers.



Taylor Mattson
AmeriCorps Camp Outreach Liaison

Taylor will be graduating from UW-Madison this spring as a dual certification education major (general and special education). She began working at camp as a volunteer in Spring 2014, loved it, and joined AmeriCorps to serve this past summer as a counselor at Camp Wawbeek. As the Camp Outreach Liaison, Taylor will be working hard to recruit new campers and encouraging past campers to return. She will also help recruit additional staff who, once hired, will enable Easter Seals to serve more campers. She hopes she can help instill the love she has for camp in others.



Chris Hemmer
AmeriCorps Veterans Coordinator

Chris began working as a weekend counselor for Easter Seals Wisconsin Camps in the fall of 2012 and fell in love with the camp atmosphere. He served his first AmeriCorps term from January to May 2014, and is excited to have the opportunity to serve in AmeriCorps as the Veterans Coordinator and to continue helping the organization that he feels has shaped him into the person he is today. Chris has enormous respect for veterans and all they do for our country. He hopes to improve networking with other agencies and people in the community to provide the best possible activities and opportunities for veterans and their families during Veterans Family Camp weekends.



Katelyn Klieve
AmeriCorps Transitions Coordinator

Katelyn is a sophomore at UW – Eau Claire who is majoring in Special Education. This past summer she worked as a counselor at Camp Wawbeek, spending a week at Respite Camp and a few weeks as a Camp Kee-B-Waw counselor as well. Katelyn is really looking forward to serving as the AmeriCorps Transitions Coordinator for the 2014-15 school year. Transitions camp sessions focus on teens transitioning to college or other independent living and help them develop skills they will need as they move into adulthood.

Respite Camp

Elks Lodge is Growing!



Additional space and some updates to the kitchen are welcome changes at Respite Camp!

A much-needed addition is coming to Respite Camp: the Elks Lodge and Dining Hall is getting an expansion! With additions of 480 square feet on the Hawk side of the Lodge and 800 square feet on the parking lot side, there will be more room to breathe, and eat comfortably, at camp.

The benefits of the additional space will have an immediate impact. Check-ins will be easier for campers and parents, and the extra room will provide private areas for campers with noise sensitivities, making it possible for them to better enjoy their meals.

The renovations, which include an upgrade to the kitchen, have been made possible by a generous donation from the Wisconsin Elks Association. Respite Camp is the State Major Project for the Elks and they have worked hard to make these long-planned additions a reality. Their ongoing support makes such a difference to the campers and families of Respite Camp!

Upcoming Wawbeek & Respite Weekend Sessions

February

February 6-8 — Respite Camp
February 13-15 — Transitions (Wawbeek)
February 20-22 — Respite Camp

March

March 6-8 — Respite Camp
March 27-29 — Wawbeek (Youth)
March 27-29 — Respite Camp

April

April 10-12 — Transitions (Wawbeek)
April 24-26 — Respite Camp

May

May 1-3 — Veterans Family Camp
May 8-10 — Respite Camp

Ken's Final Sprawl



With his retirement planned for September, 2014, Ken Saville wasn't about to let the cold temperatures and the mixture of rain and snow stop him from participating in the 16th Annual Fall Sprawl, which was held on Saturday, October 4th at Easter Seals Camp Wawbeek.

The event, which raises funds to benefit the Wisconsin Dells camp, consists of a 5K Walk and a 5K and 10K Run and is open to the public. This year, it raised more than \$10,000.

Ken has been an enthusiastic participant in Fall Sprawl each year, but announced prior to the event that this would be his last year. "The hills get a little longer and a little steeper each year," says Ken. "But I know that every dollar donated from the people who support me for the Fall Sprawl will go directly to help campers attend camp. You just can't beat that feeling!"

Ken Saville, just after crossing the finish line at his final Fall Sprawl on October 4, 2014.



Ken has worked for Easter Seals Wisconsin for almost 37 years. Starting out as a counselor at Camp Wawbeek, he now serves as Vice President of Program Development. His devotion to Camp Wawbeek is well known among campers, counselors, co-workers and the many service organizations he works with across the state, and Ken is already planning ways to make sure the money he traditionally raises for Fall Sprawl will continue now that he has hung up his walking shoes.

"While nothing is set in stone," he says, "I'm thinking of asking someone to 'Walk for Ken.' I can help with letters to my supporters and would be on hand to cheer as he or she crosses the finish line. Fall Sprawl is a great event for a great cause."