



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 2016

Strengthening the Future for Wisconsin Agriculture



Beginning Farmer Grant

The Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM program recently was awarded nearly \$500,000 by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for a three-year project, Securing Beginning Farmers Through Succession Planning. The project addresses the need of Wisconsin farmers who do not have succession plans in place, estimated at 56% of farmers over the age of 55, to ensure the successful transition of farm operations to the next generation of beginning farmers.

Succession plans are essential for farms to continue to grow throughout the generations. Devoting time to creating a sustainable succession plan is an essential component of every farm operation. Easter Seals Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Farm Center (part of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection) will be partners on this project. The long term goal is to increase the number of beginning farmers in Wisconsin by developing, with farmers and farm families, a secure and sustainable succession plan for beginning farmers to assume management of their own farm business operation.

“We are excited about the opportunity to work with the partners we have on this project, to provide essential farm succession planning not only to our clients, but also to individuals looking to begin a career in farming, or to current farmers looking to find a successor for their operation,” said Paul Leverenz, Vice President of the Easter Seals FARM Program.

The farmers and farm families will be provided guidance, information and assistance throughout the succession planning process, which may include on-farm site visits, individual and family discussions, matching with potential beginning farmers when there is not a named successor, and assistance with retirement plans, tax and inheritance issues. This project will be promoted through AgrAbility of Wisconsin, an Easter Seals Wisconsin - UW-Extension partnership, dedicated to helping farmers with a disability continue to farm.

Free Disability Awareness Program



Avenues to Understanding

What is the Program Goal?

The goal of *Avenues to Understanding* is to promote the inclusion and acceptance of people with disabilities in society by helping Wisconsin's youth to be more comfortable with their peers with disabilities and to gain more understanding of the types of architectural and attitudinal barriers that people with disabilities encounter daily.

Who Can Participate?

Public and private schools, Scout troops, faith and community based youth groups, Key Clubs and Builder's Clubs, etc., will find that they can take the concepts presented in *Avenues to Understanding* and explore them within their classroom or group. The free Educator's Guide has lesson plans, discussion starters, research and essay ideas, and suggested activities for young people from age 3-18.

When does *Avenues to Understanding* take place? How long does it take?

Avenues to Understanding can be implemented at any time during the year. Teachers and group leaders can pick and choose from among the ideas and activities suggested, molding the program to fit any available time frame. Suggestions are also offered for working disability awareness concepts into standard curriculum.



Free. Comprehensive.
For more information and to download materials, visit:
www.EasterSealsWisconsin.com



New Staff



Bonnie Kelsey, the new nurse at Camp Wawbeek and Respite Camp will be hiring, training, supervising and managing the camp nursing staff and providing direct care for both campers and staff. Bonnie is excited to be joining Easter Seals Wisconsin where she feels like she can truly make a difference in people's lives. In her free time she can be found spending time with her husband, Randy, their four dogs, four cats and whatever other sick or injured animal happens to wander their way.



Alexis McCann joined the Easter Seals Wisconsin team in August of 2015 as the AmeriCorps Program Manager. Alexis served as an AmeriCorps Member with Habitat for Humanity in 2007-2008, which she attributes to initiating her drive to serve and help others. Alexis received her Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from Florida State University, and her Master's Degree in Social Work from University of Illinois at Chicago. Alexis is looking forward to sharing her passion with other AmeriCorps Members!



Fue Yang took the job as the Technology Support Specialist for Easter Seals Wisconsin in September of 2015. He was raised in Madison and recently returned to the city after spending some time in Arkansas. Before joining Easter Seals, Fue worked for UW Health, providing IT/IS support for the UW Radiology Department. When not on the job, Fue enjoys running, camping and hunting.

Additions to Respite Camp Dining Hall

The additions to the Respite Dining Hall are complete! Additional space was added to each side of the hall to provide quieter, more private areas for campers who do not like to be in crowded or noisy areas.

The additions will also provide additional space for activities when meals are not being served.



ADMINISTRATION

Christine Fessler - President/CEO
cfessler@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.575.5465

Fue Yang - Technology Support Specialist
fyang@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1567

Sandee Horn - Executive Assistant
shorn@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1449

Maggi Earle - Administrative Office Assistant
mearle@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1551

CAMP & RESPITE PROGRAMS

Carissa Miller - Director, Camp & Respite Services
cmiller@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.432.6268

Dan Fourness - Director, Respite Camp
dfourness@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.254.2502

Stevie Thomas - Wawbeek Summer Director
stthomas@eastersealswisconsin.com

Cyndi Garza - Assistant Director, Camp Wawbeek
cgarza@eastersealswisconsin.com

Bonnie Kelsey - Nursing Coordinator
bkelsey@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.254.2502

Alexis McCann - AmeriCorps Program Manager
amccann@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1397

Ellen Rischette - Program Assistant
erischette@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1979

CLIENT ASSISTANCE

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

DEVELOPMENT

Kris Ackley - Director
kackley@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1370

Cally Ehle - Director, Grants Management
cehle@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1484

DONATION CENTER/PICKUP SERVICE

Amber Riedesel - Director
ariedesel@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.310.3001

Nance Roepke - Assistant Director/Business Manager
nroepke@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.310.3003

Trevor Bellrichard - Transportation Coordinator
tbellrichard@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.310.3002

FARM & VOCATIONAL SERVICES

Paul Leverenz - Vice President
pleverenz@eastersealswisconsin.com 920.898.9224

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 715.842.3411

Julie Jensen - Self-Employment Services Specialist
jjensen@eastersealswisconsin.com 920.431.0843

Paul Untiet - Rural Rehabilitation Specialist
puntiet@eastersealswisconsin.com 715.347.4093

Monette Below-Reinhard - Administrative Program Assistant
mbelowrei@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1446

Melba Brown - Technical Assistant
mbrown@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1372

FINANCE

Pam Ganser - Chief Financial Officer
pganser@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1387

Linda Eby - HR Coordinator/Accountant
leby@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1380

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Kim Boyer - Director
kboyer@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1479

Mary Statz - Marketing & Development Specialist
mstatz@eastersealswisconsin.com 608.237.1520

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Rent Our Beautiful Facilities!



The Gregory C. Van Wie Memorial Residence Hall

By choosing our facilities for your group, you are helping make it possible for Easter Seals to offer essential services to children and adults with disabilities in Wisconsin.



The High Ropes Course

Rentals Available September through April

With 400 beautifully-wooded acres in the Wisconsin Dells, Easter Seals Wisconsin Camps have a lot to offer, not only to campers, but to groups seeking the perfect setting for group outings, retreats and reunions. Our extensive facilities and lovely grounds can provide a memorable backdrop for any occasion.

The Van Wie Hall is a large residence hall which houses a kitchen and dining area, lounge areas, two beautiful stone fireplaces, a large deck and sleeping and bathroom facilities to accommodate 64 people. Use of the Nature Pavilion, a large meeting and activity room adjacent to the Van Wie Hall, is included in Van Wie Hall rental fees. The Van Wie Hall is fully accessible and available for rent from September through mid-May. The Elks Village sleeps 48, with an adjacent dining hall with a fully-equipped kitchen. Nearby, there are four winterized cabins, each of which sleeps 12 people in an open room arrangement. All facilities have electric heat, air conditioning and bathroom facilities, including showers. There is also a large indoor sports facility. All buildings are fully accessible and are available for rent from September through mid-May. Other lodging options are also available.

Our ziplines and high and low ropes courses are available – along with experienced staff to supervise and ensure safety – by special arrangement to those using our facilities.

To learn more, email Ellen at erischette@eastersealswisconsin.com or call her at 608.237.1979.

Donation Center



Are you thinking of selling or trading in that old car or truck?

Why not donate it instead?

Easter Seals Wisconsin accepts donations of vehicles in good working order including cars, trucks, boats or trailers. To donate, call 1.877.208.5109.

Cash for Clothes Success!

Cash for Clothes, a new fundraising opportunity for non-profit partners and Easter Seals WI, is in full swing with schools, churches, domestic violence shelters, and animal shelters, along with many others. Bruce Guadalupe Middle School, a member of the Youth Empowered to Success (YES) Program through Marquette University, recently partnered with Easter Seals to raise money for uniforms for 16 of their students that competed in a national triathlon in August; these uniforms were especially important as this was their first national meet! Bruce Guadalupe raised over \$300 by collecting 1,524 pounds of soft goods, including clothing, linens, accessories, and shoes. We are thrilled with the opportunity to partner with great organizations like Youth Empowered to Success. If you are interested in getting more information on this program for your not-for-profit group, please contact us at dcenter@eastersealswisconsin.com or give us a call at 1.877.208.5109.

Farm Program



Grant will Help Provide Guidance to Entrepreneurs

Easter Seals Wisconsin was awarded funding through the USDA Rural Development Rural Business Development Grant Program (RBDG). The \$21,000 grant will be used by Easter Seals Wisconsin Self-Employment Services over a one year period to provide technical assistance to individuals with disabilities, aiding in the creation of additional employment opportunities and the improvement of economic conditions in a 14-county area in northeast Wisconsin.

The purpose of the RBDG program is to promote economic development in rural communities with exceptional needs. Organizations that provide technical assistance, job-creation, or training activities were chosen as recipients.

“This award will help us provide assistance to entrepreneurs with disabilities,” says Christine Fessler, President & CEO of Easter Seals Wisconsin. “We’re looking forward to working with Rural Development to further our joint goals of helping people with disabilities move toward economic self-sufficiency.”

AgrAbility of Wisconsin Celebrates 25 Years of Service

The longest running agricultural rehabilitation program in America – AgrAbility of Wisconsin – is celebrating 25 years of service this year. Created in 1991, AgrAbility of Wisconsin helps farmers and agricultural workers with disabilities successfully accommodate their disability and continue to farm, return to farming or develop an alternative agricultural occupation. The program is a partnership between the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, UW-Extension and the Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM Program.

The program boasts a better than 90% success rate of helping farmers achieve their rehabilitation goals and serves as *the* national model for similar programs across the United States.



Disability HelpLine

Music Therapy Engages Children

It’s well-known that music can have an effect on listeners. But Jill Gretzinger, Coordinator for the Outagamie County Disability HelpLine, was still amazed while watching certified music therapist Sara Devine work with seventeen energetic children with autism during an Autism Family Network event in the Fox Valley sponsored by Easter Seals Wisconsin. Not only did the children remain engaged in the music throughout the event, they listened to and followed directions, shared with one another and had fun!

This great event left staff wondering how the opportunity to use music to improve social skills might be increased in the Fox Valley. So, working collaboratively, the Disability HelpLine, SOAR Fox Cities and Expressive Therapies submitted a grant that was approved by the Community Foundation for the Fox River Valley, to provide music enrichment classes to kids with autism and other disabilities with a goal of improving their social skills. The grant provides funding to provide 6 six-week classes and four community drumming events. It will cover most costs for participants, with families paying only \$10 for the entire six week class. Three of the classes were to be offered by Easter Seals Wisconsin and three by SOAR Fox Cities. The first 6-week class offered by Easter Seals Wisconsin was designed for 4-8 year olds with autism. It started in September and ran through most of October.

Addison

Katie Ringbauer, whose five year old daughter, Addison, participated, was excited by the opportunity to enroll her daughter in the class, something she had always wanted to do, but had found cost prohibitive. “We have always tried to tie music into everything Addison does because she is so receptive to it,” says Katie. “This opportunity was amazing for Addison and we are very thankful for the chance we received to take the class! The social, emotional, and communication she learned in class will be a huge benefit to her.”

To learn more, contact Jill Gretzinger at jgretzinger@eastersealswisconsin.com or by phone at 920.832.0344.

Upcoming Events



Join Us at Blizzard Blast!

For 28 years, the Dane County Council of Snowmobile Clubs (DCCSC) has been hosting Blizzard Blast, a fun, family-friendly event created to raise money for Easter Seals Wisconsin. And they’ve been remarkably successful in that intent, raising more than \$250,000 over the years!

Join us for this year’s event!

February 6, 2016

4:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Rex’s Innkeeper

301 North Century Avenue • Waunakee

Games, raffles, a silent auction and music provided by Tourdot Tunes DJ & Karaoke are planned, with opportunities to bid on sports memorabilia jewelry, gift baskets, snowmobile accessories and more. The \$20 per person ticket price also includes a dinner buffet with free beer and soda.

4:00 pm – 7:30 pm	Silent Auction, Bucket Raffles & Hourly Door Prizes
4:00 pm – 8:30 pm	Tourdot Tunes DJ & Karaoke
5:00 pm – 7:00 pm	Dinner Buffet
8:00 pm	Raffle Drawing - 12 winners with a top prize of \$1000!

Tickets can be purchased through any DCCSC member club or through Easter Seals Wisconsin. For more information, contact Easter Seals Wisconsin at 608.237.1370.

Friends of Wawbeek & Respite



Your Annual Gift will Make a Difference!

Would you like to make a difference in the lives of our campers on a recurring basis? Do you recognize that camp is a magical place for campers and provides thousands of families with much needed respite time? We invite you to join our annual giving program, Friends of Wawbeek or Friends of Respite. This annual giving program is devoted to helping campers and their families who cannot afford camp on their own.

Members of our Friends programs agree to make a gift each year, with suggested giving levels starting at an affordable \$25. Reminders are sent annually on the anniversary of your first gift. In honor of your first Friends gift, Easter Seals will include a commemorative ornament celebrating your designated Camp along with your acknowledgement. The true incentive, though, is in knowing that you have helped make it possible for someone to attend camp who may not otherwise have been able to do so.

If you would like to join the Friends of Wawbeek or Friends of Respite program, please contact us at 608.237.1370 or visit our website at www.eastersealswisconsin.com for more information.



Save the Date

March 19 & 20

Pictures with the Easter Bunny
Outlets at the Dells
Wisconsin Dells

April 5

Annual Campaign Kicks Off
Statewide

April 5

Colleen Realty Wine Event
Casa Capri
Kenosha

June 28

Golf Outing for Kids
Wild Rock Golf Club & Trappers Turn
Wisconsin Dells

August 5

Skip Ellenbecker Memorial Golf Outing
Marathon

Camp Wawbeek



Camp Wawbeek isn't Just for Kids!

When she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, DeAnna, 58, never imagined how much the condition would affect her life. Just twenty years ago, she was working at a veteran's affairs medical center, not thinking that someday she would be using a wheelchair for mobility. Dealing with the challenges so many people using wheelchairs encounter on a daily basis changed her life and, four years ago, her IRIS counselor encouraged her to attend Camp Wawbeek for a week in the summer, a place where accessibility wouldn't be a problem.

"There are so many things I can do here at Camp Wawbeek that I'm not able to do at home. Normal things," DeAnna says. "Where I live, it's not disability friendly. Without help, I'm unable to wash my hands, take a shower, or get a

drink of water. When I came here, it was like I finally found freedom, because it was like I found normal people for myself that I could relate to...I had people that could relate to me because they had the same needs that I did."

While going away to a summer camp where she did not know anyone seemed intimidating at first for DeAnna, she quickly found her place at Camp Wawbeek.

"I love it here," she gushes. "If I could spend the whole summer here, I would be so happy. It's like I have a home here."

Easter Seals Wisconsin's Camp Wawbeek is truly a one-of-a-kind camp experience for people with disabilities. Even among long-time supporters, though, there are many who aren't aware that the camp is open to adults as well as children. Indeed, some of the adult campers at Camp Wawbeek have been coming to camp for most of their lives, looking forward to the time spent with their camp friends each year. Others, like DeAnna, are just discovering the opportunities that camp holds for them as adults.

To potential campers, DeAnna had some advice to share. "You need to come here and experience the wonders of nature, you need to experience the wonders of other individuals, wonders of the pool and the crafts, the wonders of small zip lining if you're afraid of large zip lining and the wonders of meeting all different types of people with different disabilities. There are wonders around the world. We are waiting for you here at Wawbeek."



Upcoming Wawbeek & Respite Weekend Sessions

February

- February 12-14 — Respite Camp
- February 26-28 — Wawbeek (Youth)
- February 26-28 — Respite Camp

March

- March 11-13 — Transitions (Wawbeek)
- March 11-13 — Respite Camp

April

- April 1-3 — Respite Camp
- April 15-17 — Respite Camp
- April 29-May 1 — Veterans Family Camp

May

- May 13-15 — High Functioning Autism (Wawbeek)

Volunteerism



Brian, who attends Respite Camp, enjoyed raking with a group of campers at the Wisconsin Dells Rotary Park.

Opportunities to Help Others

As a non-profit, Easter Seals Wisconsin depends on volunteers for a number of programs and projects and understands how much they mean to our organization. So when the opportunity comes up for us to help other groups and organizations, we're happy to do so!

Staff members take part in National Days of Service such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January and Make a Difference Day in the fall. These days of service encourage groups from all over the country to participate in making their communities better places.

This year, on Make a Difference Day, our Respite staff, volunteers and campers headed over to Wisconsin Dells Rotary Park. There, they spent the afternoon raking, cleaning up litter and winterizing the baseball diamonds. The park, near Camp Wawbeek and the Wisconsin Elks/Easter Seals Respite Camp, is a perfect place for campers to enjoy kickball, tee-ball and space to play during the summer months. For that reason alone, helping to clean it up was an attractive service project. But the time spent on the project benefited the whole community and campers were proud to be a part of the crew, doing something for others.

Most communities and organizations offer opportunities to volunteer. If you would like to offer your services to Easter Seals Wisconsin projects, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Anna Korb, at volunteer@eastersealswisconsin.com.

AmeriCorps



Meet Our Leadership Team!

Each year, the Easter Seals Wisconsin – AmeriCorps Partnership has a team of motivated individuals serving as AmeriCorps Team Leaders. This year, these positions are held by Anna Korb (Volunteer Coordinator), Kadie Jo Butteris (Outreach Liaison), Sarah Fischer (Transition Coordinator), and

Christopher Hemmer (Veterans Coordinator). These four AmeriCorps Members work hard behind-the-scenes to help make Camp Wawbeek and the Wisconsin Elks/Easter Seals Respite Camp run smoothly.

Anna attends career/internship fairs and reaches out to University programs to recruit volunteers; she then interviews & trains all volunteers that attend camp. Kadie Jo takes charge on outreach for both Respite & Wawbeek in sharing the word about camp. She speaks to any group that has an interest in camp or in sending a loved one to camp. Sarah takes care of planning all four Transition Camp sessions at Wawbeek – including setting goals with the campers for a final project to put all their new transitions skills to use. Christopher is serving his second term as Veterans Coordinator. He plans the Veterans Family Weekends and contacts organizations associated with vets to share with as many people as possible.

Easter Seals Wisconsin truly appreciates all their work!



One of the specialty sessions offered at Camp Wawbeek, the Veterans Family Camp is coordinated by Chris Hemmer, an AmeriCorps member who is part of this year's leadership team.