



Easter Seals Wisconsin

8001 Excelsior Drive, Suite 200
Madison, Wisconsin 53717

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Independence

The newsletter of Easter Seals Wisconsin
Winter/Spring 2017

Honoring those who Make a Difference



Back row, left to right: Gloria Hafemeister, Barry Richter, Pat Richter, Mark Schilling, Mark Jelinek.
Front row, left to right: Scott Menzel, Kathy Schmitt

Recognition Dinner

The 2016 "Difference Makers" were honored at the Easter Seals Wisconsin Recognition Dinner, held October 2016 in Madison. These individuals, groups and businesses have inspired others and made outstanding contributions to the disability community and to Easter Seals Wisconsin.

2016 Honorees

Pat Richter & Barry Richter, Outstanding Volunteers

Since 2005, Pat and Barry have hosted, as well as co-chaired, the annual Golf Outing for Kids in Wisconsin Dells. Each year, the Golf Outing for Kids brings Easter Seals donors and sponsors together with celebrity golfers to raise money for Easter Seals Wisconsin Camps. Their leadership has helped raise nearly \$1.5 million, helping to keep our camps available to everyone who would like to attend and helping campers gain greater independence.

Rick Lonigro, Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser

Rick was first introduced to Easter Seals in the late 90's after accepting the role as Volunteer Fundraiser for the Easter Seals Annual Campaign for his company, Grant Thornton. As Rick attended various Easter Seals Wisconsin events he realized he wanted to do more. He joined the Board of Directors in 2002 as a member of the Audit Committee and stayed on the Board until 2009. Rick continues as a VIP fundraiser for the Annual Campaign year after year, and has raised nearly \$70,000 for Easter Seals Wisconsin and its programs! The clients and families impacted have truly moved him, and as a former member of the Audit Committee he knows how the agency spends its money. "97% of the money really does go directly to services and to programs...showing you the integrity of the organization," says Rick. "I'm asked to give to a lot of various causes, but Easter Seals Wisconsin has my heart."

(continued on Page 7)

Donation Center



New Drop-Off Locations in Northwestern Wisconsin

Conveniently located drop-off bins make donating gently used clothing (including linens, accessories, and shoes), and household goods easier!

We have new locations in the following areas: Altoona, Barron, Boyceville, Connersville, Chetek, Clear Lake, Colfax, Cornell, Cumberland, Durand, Hudson, Jim Falls, Lake Holcombe, Menomonie, Mondovi, New Auburn, Prairie Farm, Rice Lake, Ridgeland, Spring Valley, and St. Croix Falls.

A full list of all 80 bin locations in the state can be found at: www.donatesw.com. You can also call us at 1.877.208.5109 to find the drop-off location most convenient to you, or to schedule a free at-home pickup. We very much appreciate all donations made to both our bin program and home collection service. The proceeds generated through our collection efforts go directly to growing and strengthening Easter Seals' programs and services.





Birschbach Elected Board Chair



Pam Birschbach has been in real estate for 18 years, working with the First Weber Group in the Fitchburg office. There, as part of "Team First Weber," Birschbach has been actively raising funds for Easter Seals as a top VIP in the Annual Campaign for several years.

A graduate of the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Birschbach moved to Wisconsin in 1990 and currently lives in Verona with her husband Eric, a private consultant in the farming industry. Her involvements are very family-oriented and include her church and her children's school activities. She also serves on the board of the First Weber Foundation.

New Board Members



Joy Royston grew up in Black Earth, Wisconsin. After four years of teaching and two years at home with her young children, she and her husband Dave opened Sports Impressions, a screen printing and embroidery business, in Wisconsin Dells. Printing shirts and working with the Camp staff is how she first became aware of Camp Wawbeek and the wonderful programs they offer. Joy has been a participant in the Camp Wawbeek Fall Sprawl, and attended the picnic dinner following the Golf Outing for Kids for a number of years. She and her husband continue to run Sports Impressions and also own and operate JustAgame Fieldhouse in Wisconsin Dells along with their two adult sons, Kyler and Jade.



Zach Morley grew up in Maryville, Missouri and moved to Madison to attend the University of Wisconsin and play basketball for the Badgers. After retiring from professional basketball in Europe, he decided it was time to focus his attention on finding ways to be more involved in his own community here in Wisconsin. Zach attended the Starry Night event with a friend, was impressed by the Easter Seals programs he was introduced to that night, and knew that he had found an organization he would be proud to be a part of. When asked to serve on the Board, he quickly accepted and he's excited to do his part in helping enhance the lives of those with disabilities. Zach is a financial advisor with Wisconsin Financial Group and lives in Middleton with his wife, Rachel, and kids Rowan and Fallon.

We've moved!

Our new address is:

**Easter Seals Wisconsin
8001 Excelsior Drive, Suite 200
Madison, Wisconsin 53717**

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Recognition Dinner (cont.)



Scott Menzel, Personal Growth & Development

"Do what you love and you will never work a day in your life." For Scott Menzel, who was born with spinal muscular atrophy type 2, creating art is what he loves and he's found a way to make a successful business of it. After receiving his Bachelor's degree in graphic communications and taking several entrepreneurship courses, he wanted to put together an art business but ran into a few hurdles. By working with Julie Jensen and the Easter Seals Wisconsin Self-Employment Services Program (SES), Scott was able to find the resources he needed to make his dream a reality. He has since become a great ambassador of the SES Program, speaking to donors at special events and to the disability community as he travels the state exhibiting his artwork. Scott has been hired to create custom pieces and continues to prove that anyone can achieve great things when they put their mind to it.



art by Scott Menzel

Tommy Bartlett, Inc., Outstanding Service

The proximity of Easter Seals Wisconsin's camps to Wisconsin Dells has fostered dozens of unique relationships between the camps and the Dells business community for nearly 80 years. One of the strongest relationships is the one shared with Tommy Bartlett Show and Exploratory. Campers love the many things to see and experience at the Exploratory and staff have been given opportunities to enjoy some time off there during their intense training sessions. The friendly nature of the Tommy Bartlett staff helps ensure visits there will continue to be one of our campers' most cherished memories.

Charles & Jean Balsmeider, Outstanding Philanthropy

One of the first interactions between Easter Seals and Charlie and Jean Balsmeider occurred years ago when they decided to donate a portion of beer sales made over the Memorial Day weekend through their business, Balsmeider Distributing, to Camp Wawbeek. The promotion raised over \$6,000 for the camp. Various promotions continued over the years and, even after the business was sold in 1991, the couple continued to support Easter Seals and our camp programs. To date, they have donated close to \$100,000 to the organization! They have helped with camp projects such as the Van Wie Hall, Respite Camp Expansion and the new pool and campers have benefited greatly from their generous spirit.

Wisconsin Farm Center, Outstanding Partner

Since the inception of the FARM Program 25 years ago, the Farm Center has been a collaborative organization that has strongly supported our efforts. Their team has gone above and beyond to help farmers with disabilities and to use their influence to make a difference. In 2015, the Wisconsin Farm Center and Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM Program teamed up to initiate the Beginning Farmer program, funded by a grant from the USDA. Together, the two organizations are helping farmers create succession plans for their farm business operations to transition to the next generation.

Knights of Columbus State Council, Outstanding Service Organization

Many organizations help Easter Seals Wisconsin through service projects and fundraising events. One such event is the Knights of Columbus Campaign for People with Intellectual Disabilities (more popularly known as the Tootsie Roll Drive), which has been taking place nationally since 1970. Individual councils choose local organizations to receive a portion of raised funds, while the rest goes towards scholarships and grants. In the last seven years alone, the Wisconsin Knights of Columbus Councils have donated close to \$40,000 to Easter Seals Wisconsin Camps! Funds are used to revitalize camp facilities and provide camperships for campers and families in need who, without the help, would not be able to send their loved one to camp.

Gloria Hafemeister, Outstanding Media

When Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM Program and UW-Extension founded AgrAbility of Wisconsin in 1991, its mission was to support farmers living with a farm injury, disability, or limitation. As AgrAbility of Wisconsin's mission was focused on serving farmers, Gloria joined the original Advisory Council to support the organization. For the last 25 years, Gloria has continued this support by writing stories about the clients served by AgrAbility and FARM and covering other AgrAbility news. Her dedication has informed many who may not have otherwise known about AgrAbility, providing information on available services and how to learn more about them. She has continued to shed light on the opportunities that exist for farm families facing the challenges that injuries, accidents and disabling conditions can present.

Thank you so much to our award recipients who have done so much to make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities!

Farm Program

Rural Business Development Grant Provides Guidance to Entrepreneurs

Easter Seals Wisconsin Self-Employment Services (SES) works one-on-one with entrepreneurs to evaluate their self-employment ideas from both a business standpoint and with respect to issues presented by the individuals' disabilities.

Last year, SES was awarded a grant through the USDA Rural Business Development Grant Program to be used 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.

Over the course of the grant year, SES conducted planned outreach to the Native American populations in Menominee and Forest Counties through the Northwoods Nijjii Enterprise Community, Vocation Rehabilitation for Native Americans, and local AIVR offices, completed Feasibility Screenings and Business Plans, and created three new jobs and the potential for an additional 12 jobs in the project area, all of which met or exceeded the objectives of the grant. In addition, one of the completed Feasibility Screenings was completed as a comprehensive business plan, resulting in the individual launching his business. This business not only created employment for him, but for eight additional individuals.



Beginning Farmer Grant Assists with Succession Plans

In 2015, the Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM program was awarded a grant by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for a three-year project, Securing Beginning Farmers through Succession Planning. The FARM Program is working with the Wisconsin Farm Center (part of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection) on this project. Succession plans are essential for farms to continue to grow through generations. 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.

In the first year of the grant, 43 farmers were referred to the Wisconsin Farm Center (WFC) by Easter Seals Wisconsin Rural Rehabilitation Specialists, 19 of whom completed succession plans. Thus far, in year two of the grant, the WFC is working with 54 farmers on succession planning and have completed 12 plans. Press articles covering the grant have also raised awareness among farmers of the importance of succession planning.



Upcoming Events

Join Us at Blizzard Blast!

The 2017 Blizzard Blast, hosted by the Dane County Council of Snowmobile Clubs, will be another fun, family friendly event with casino games, raffles and live auction planned.

Join us for this year's event!
February 4, 2017
4:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Comfort Inn & Suites
5025 County Road V • DeForest

Area radio personality and comedian Mitch Henck will take the stage from 6:30 - 7:15. Tickets are just \$20 per person and include admission, raffle entry, buffet dinner, beer and soda.

4:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Casino Games, Raffles & Door Prizes
5:00 pm - 6:30 pm	Dinner Buffet
6:30 pm - 7:15 pm	Comedian Mitch Henck
8:15 pm - 9:00 pm	Live Auction
9:00 pm	Cash Raffle Drawing

Tickets can be purchased through any Dane County Council of Snowmobile Club or Easter Seals Wisconsin. For more information, contact Easter Seals Wisconsin at 608.237.1370.



New Staff



Stacey Murnighan joined Easter Seals Wisconsin staff as Director of Marketing and Communications in November of 2016, bringing with her over nine years of marketing and graphic design experience. Stacey is excited to join the Easter Seals Wisconsin team and learn more about the programs and people they serve. "I have a passion for serving the community and have many years of volunteer experience, as well as building programs at a local level. There's no better feeling than giving back and I believe, in this position with Easter Seals Wisconsin, I'll be doing just that." Stacey and her husband Bill moved to Madison from Lexington, Kentucky in 2015.



Alex Peters has been hired as the Assistant Director for Camp Wawbeek. Alex first volunteered at camp in 2010, served as an AmeriCorps member in 2012, and has been the Ropes Course Director since 2013. He has also arranged camper trips, worked with the Transitions sessions and served as the dietary aide for campers with special dietary needs. Alex grew up in Menasha and attended UW-Milwaukee. He's looking forward to being back at Camp Wawbeek, working with people he has come to care for so much over the last few years, and helping the program to grow. Alex says that being at camp is so magical and that the connections campers make with each other and staff is his favorite thing to see when he's there.

Disability HelpLine

New Office for Disability HelpLine

It was an autumn of moving for Easter Seals Wisconsin. The state office changed locations (see page 5) and, after 20 years at the Thompson Community Center in downtown Appleton, the Outagamie County Disability HelpLine moved as well — to a new location.

The new office is housed in a renovated elementary school on the grounds of St. Bernadette's Parish. In addition to the HelpLine office, two other nonprofits as well as many social/recreational activities for seniors have also moved to the same building. The new office address is 2331 E. Lourdes Drive, Appleton, WI 54915. The phone number and email address for the HelpLine remain the same (920.832.0344; jgretzinger@eastersealswisconsin.com).

Staff are busy settling in, reacquainting themselves with many of the faces from the downtown center and serving the needs of Outagamie County families!



Save the Date

- March 18**
Winter Warm Up
Springbrook Resort • Wisconsin Dells
- April 4**
Annual Campaign Begins • Statewide
- April 6**
Century 21 Colleen Realty Wine Event
Casa Capri • Kenosha
- April 8 & 9 and April 14 & 15**
Photos with the Easter Bunny
Outlets at the Dells • Wisconsin Dells
- April 11**
Spaghetti Dinner
Respite Camp • Wisconsin Dells
- May 6**
Human Race • Appleton
- May 13**
Camp Clean Up
Camp Wawbeek & Respite Camp
Wisconsin Dells
- June 28**
Golf Outing for Kids
Wild Rock Golf Club & Trappers Turn
Wisconsin Dells
- July 29**
Skip Ellenbecker Memorial Golf Outing
Marathon

Respite Camp



New Director of Respite Camp

Cyndi Hemmer has been named the new Director of Respite Camp. Cyndi started working for Easter Seals in 2011 as the Arts & Crafts Programmer at Camp Wawbeek and has served in a variety of roles at both Easter Seals camps since then. She was the AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator for two years, the Respite Camp Program Director, and most recently acted as the Assistant Director at Camp Wawbeek. Cyndi feels that her history with Easter Seals Wisconsin Camps and the various roles she has taken on there have prepared her for this new role. She is looking forward to meeting more campers and their families, seeing an increase in new campers attending camp and helping develop staff leadership opportunities.

In September 2016, Camp Wawbeek was the setting of Cyndi's wedding to Chris Hemmer. The couple met at camp (Chris worked as a camp counselor and served two terms as the AmeriCorps Veterans Coordinator), and they could think of no place they would rather start the next phase of their life together. "It was wonderful to welcome our family and friends to the place that has meant so much to us," says Cyndi. "We were able to celebrate not only our love for each other with our guests, but our love for camp." Chris and Cyndi even asked guests to choose an item from the Camp Needs Wish List and consider giving that as a wedding tribute rather than purchasing a gift for the couple. Easter Seals extends its best wishes to the couple and thanks them for their generous gesture!



Chris & Cyndi Hemmer

New State Office



We've Moved!

In September of 2016, after 26 years at our Nob Hill Road location, Easter Seals Wisconsin moved to Madison's west side.

The new suite, while somewhat smaller than our old office, boasts large windows that bring in great quantities of natural light and allow employees to enjoy the trees around the building — something our old location lacked. The new space also comes to us at considerable financial savings.

To celebrate our new home, we invite you to join us at an

Open House

Friday, January 27, 2017

3:00 to 5:00 pm with Remarks at 4:00

8001 Excelsior Drive, Suite 200

Madison, Wisconsin 53717

Please RSVP to Stacey Murnighan at smurnighan@eastersealswisconsin.com



The front desk area showcases the new Easter Seals logo which we will be formally adopting in September 2017.

Windows on two walls of the large conference room keep the room bright even when Wisconsin skies are grey. Photos of clients throughout the suite highlight the importance of our mission and the programs we provide.



Employees are able to personalize their offices with artwork, plants and photos brought from home.



Rally for a Reason



The 46th Annual Wisconsin Dells BMW Rally, sponsored by the Wisconsin BMW Motorrad Club, was held September 9-11 at Easter Seals Camp Wawbeek. It was the first year the rally was held at camp, and despite the mostly rainy weather, attendees loved the new location!



Rally photos by Stephen J. Reinke Photography

A gathering of BMW Motorcycle enthusiasts, the event was dubbed the *Rally for a Reason* this year, and raised nearly \$7,000 for Easter Seals — funds that will be used to support Camp Wawbeek. Another \$1,800 was raised for the Lion's Club and \$300 for the Kilbourn Volunteer Fire Department. Organizers were thrilled with the successful fundraiser and are already planning to hold the 2017 event at Camp Wawbeek again.

Upcoming Wawbeek & Respite Weekend Sessions

February

- February 10-12 — Respite Camp
- February 10-12 — Wawbeek (Transition)
- February 24-26 — Wawbeek (Youth)
- February 24-26 — Respite Camp

March

- March 3-5 — Wawbeek (High Functioning Autism)
- March 10-12 — Respite Camp
- March 24-26 — Respite Camp
- March 24-26 — Wawbeek (Transitions)

April

- April 7-9 — Respite Camp
- April 28-30 — Respite Camp

May

- May 5-7 — Veterans Family Camp

AmeriCorps



The 2016-2017 AmeriCorps members got off to a strong start! This fall, Easter Seals Wisconsin had eight AmeriCorps members serving as Respite Apprentices at Respite Camp, where they planned all programming activities for weekend respite sessions and spent time one-on-one with the campers. Erin McKenna, Jaylin Marshall, Tara Scott, Kory Pucker, Kenadie Mahlum, Alicia Dickinson, Jessica Kramer, and Allyssa Merlo completed their AmeriCorps terms on December 30th, at the conclusion of the four-day Respite session. January brought in eight new (and some returning!)

AmeriCorps Respite Apprentices who will serve through April, including Erin McKenna, Alicia Dickinson, Jaylin Marshall, Hanna Giegerich (the returnees), and Emma Anderson, Stephanie Shudarek, Ashley Gunder, and Kylee Britton.

Our AmeriCorps Leadership Team is making strides as well. Brianna Walczak, AmeriCorps Transitions Coordinator, has just completed her second Transitions weekend at Camp Wawbeek. Bri has done a great job in planning activities that are not only fun, but also very beneficial to the campers. Anna McCartney, AmeriCorps Camp Outreach Liaison, has put together postcards for camp weekend sessions and focuses on some social media outreach — keep a lookout for that on our Facebook page! Maggi Earle, AmeriCorps Veterans Coordinator, successfully planned, organized, and managed her first Veterans Family Camp Weekend in September and is making plans for the veterans coming for the May session. Lastly, Rachel Howell, AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator, stepped into her new role without hesitation and has quickly become a key part of our Camp Department. Rachel has taken initiative to make the experience for volunteers run as smoothly as possible, and has done an outstanding job in providing support to all volunteers at both camps (sometimes up to 25-30 volunteers at one time!).

Our Easter Seals Wisconsin AmeriCorps members are valued and appreciated members of the Easter Seals Wisconsin family. They have each made a commitment to a term of National Service, and we are so grateful for their generous gift of themselves and their time.



AmeriCorps Member Jaylin Marshall enjoys the snow with a happy Respite camper in December.