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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fessler Retires as CEO of Easterseals Wisconsin, Board Names Leverenz as Successor

Madison, WI – Christine Fessler retired on September 1, 2020 after more than 26 years as President & CEO of Easterseals Wisconsin. Since 1994, she saw net assets grow from \$1.9 to \$10.2 million. Camp Wawbeek grew from serving 424 campers annually to close to 1100, Respite from 129 to 800 campers, and FARM from serving 80 farmers to almost 500 each year.

“It has been an honor to lead Easterseals Wisconsin for the past 26 years and to serve thousands of children and adults with disabilities in our state,” says Fessler. “I am confident, that as a team, we have laid a strong foundation and the agency is well positioned for future success. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your President and CEO.”



The Easterseals Wisconsin Board of Directors announced Paul Leverenz, Vice President of FARM & Vocational Services, to replace retiring Christine Fessler, as President & CEO of the organization. Leverenz began his new position on September 2, 2020.

“The Executive Search Committee, chaired by Pam Birschbach of First Weber Group Realtors, worked diligently over the past several months to ensure that we understood the needs of the job and the attributes needed to successfully lead the organization into the future,” says Board Chair Jason Klawonn of Northwestern Mutual. “After a nationwide search, we talked with a number of external candidates, some of them highly qualified. And when all was said and done, Paul rose to the top! We have confidence in Paul’s vision, discernment, pragmatism, and steady leadership, and we have conviction in Paul’s passion for both our mission and how much he cares for the wonderful staff at the agency.”

In response to his promotion as CEO and President of Easterseals Wisconsin, “I’m fortunate to have had the chance to work with and learn from Chris Fessler for so many years and am grateful that she is leaving the agency in a stable and strong position,” says Leverenz. “It’s also been a true privilege to work with the talented and skilled staff that we have in the organization. I look forward to collaborating with them to move our services forward.”

Before being named CEO in September 2020, Paul held various leadership positions within the agency. He is known best for his deep commitment to the clients served through Easterseals Wisconsin and has spent much of his career leading the agency’s nationally honored FARM Program since its inception in 1989. During that time, Paul was Director of the program for 10 years before becoming Vice President of FARM and Vocational Services for the next 18 years. In that role he oversaw outreach activities, on-site assessments, and business plans for the department which also encompassed

Self-Employment Services and the Disability HelpLine of Outagamie County. Along with those responsibilities, he served as liaison to the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and AgrAbility of Wisconsin. During his career with Easterseals Wisconsin, Paul has developed a strong sense of leadership and understanding of the intricacies of nonprofit management and looks forward to leading the agency and serving its clients in this new capacity.

For over 90 years, Easterseals Wisconsin has provided services that help children and adults with disabilities gain greater independence. Easterseals Wisconsin's primary services – vocational rehabilitation, respite services, camping and recreation, information and referral, and public education – benefit close to 10,000 individuals with disabilities and their families each year throughout Wisconsin.

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