



Independence

Easterseals Wisconsin Newsletter
Summer/Fall 2021

Easterseals Wisconsin - Celebrating 95 Years!

As we mark 95 years of providing unique services to children and adults with disabilities across Wisconsin, we'd like to share a few of the significant milestones in what has been an exciting, sometimes challenging, but always incredibly rewarding, journey:

- 1926:** Easterseals Wisconsin (ESW) founded as the Wisconsin Association for the Disabled.
- 1938:** Upham sisters donate 400 acres of land in Wisconsin Dells to ESW for the purpose of creating a camp for children with disabilities. Camp Wawbeek, now the oldest Easterseals camp in the world, is born!
- 1941:** The Homebased Enterprise Program is established in Wisconsin, run by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). DVR contracts with ESW to create the Wisconsin Craftsman Program.
- 1967:** Easterseals officially adopted the "Easter Seals" name after the visibility of the Easter "Seals" campaign, implemented in 1934, triggers a nationwide expansion of the organization and a swell of grassroots efforts on behalf of people with disabilities.
- 1977:** Pioneer Camp created for Camp Wawbeek campers who sought a more adventurous camp experience.
- 1989:** ESW Board approves the creation of the Resource Center for Farmers with Disabilities (RCFD).
- 1990:** Nationwide, Easterseals affiliates help in passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

1991: Through US Department of Agriculture funding, ESW's RCFD teams up with the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension to form AgrAbility of Wisconsin.

1992: Answering a statewide need for respite care, the Wisconsin Elks and ESW create Respite Camp.

1995: Made possible by the Loretta Ricker Trust, the Disability HelpLine is established in Outagamie County.

1995: Inaugural Golf Outing for Kids held; event has since raised more than \$2 million.

2002: Wisconsin Craftsman stores close as DVR discontinues funding after 61 years.

2002: ESW enters into agreement with DVR to triple services to farmers with disabilities statewide through the FARM Program (formerly RCFD) and provide ongoing training to DVR staff.

2004: Gregory C. Van Wie Girls Dorm built at Camp Wawbeek.

2005: Self-Employment Services instituted to help entrepreneurs with disabilities find opportunities and greater independence through self-employment.

2006: New Respite facility built, increasing the number of campers served by 35%.

2006: Camp expands to include people with high-functioning autism.

2009: Veterans Family Camp launched at ESW camps.

2010: FARM Program begins project to train state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies nationwide in providing services to farmers.

2014: New Kiwanis swimming pool opens at Camp Wawbeek.

2015: FARM Program begins project to help farmers develop succession plans.

2017: ESW adopts new look and logo (which includes merging "Easter" and "Seals" into one word) - the national organization's most significant rebrand in nearly 50 years.

Bill Holley - In Memoriam

A cherished member of the Easterseals Wisconsin (ESW) family was lost in June, with the passing of Bill Holley.

For four decades, Bill demonstrated his commitment to our mission in dozens of ways. He served on the Board of Directors, raised hundreds of thousands of dollars as a volunteer fundraiser, shared our message with his family and colleagues, and encouraged his fellow board members and ESW staff to dream big of ways the agency could better serve people with disabilities. His hard work, vision, and dedication 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.

In 2014, Easterseals Wisconsin honored Bill with the Lifetime Achievement Award at our Recognition Dinner. ESW board and staff members share their thoughts about Bill, and his impact on them and on ESW in this video, which was shown that evening: <https://bit.ly/2XXwnqZ>

We extend our deepest sympathy to Bill's wife, Lynn, and to their family and friends. Bill was a wonderful human being - kind, generous, funny, friendly, and a true gentleman. He will be deeply missed. We consider ourselves so fortunate to have known him, and to have benefited for so many years from his passionate support.



(Left) Bill, on right, with Tom Woodward and Christine Fessler at the 2014 Easterseals Wisconsin Recognition Dinner, where he was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

(Right) Bill in action at the 2013 Golf Outing for Kids in Wisconsin Dells.



ADMINISTRATION

Paul Leverenz • President/CEO
pleverenz@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.225.2394
Sande Horn • Executive Assistant
shorn@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1449
Lorrie Greene • Technology Support Specialist
lgreene@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1567

CAMP & RESPITE PROGRAMS

Carissa Peterson • Vice President, Camp & Respite Services
cpeterson@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.432.6268
Anna Chambers • Director, Respite Camp
achambers@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.254.2502
Alex Peters • Director, Camp Wawbeek
apeters@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.254.8319
Anna Korb • AmeriCorps Program Manager
akorb@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1397
Brenda Nelson • Camp Billing Specialist
bnelson@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1372
Emily Mead • Camp Billing Assistant
emead@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1576

CLIENT ASSISTANCE

Pattie Slempek • Coordinator, Outagamie Co. Disability HelpLine
pslempek@eastersealswisconsin.com • 920.832.0344
Jill Gretzinger • Coordinator, Guardian Assistance Program
jgretzinger@eastersealswisconsin.com • 920.832.0344

DEVELOPMENT

Rachel Reichhoff • Director, Development
rreichhoff@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1370
Cally Ehle • Director, Grants Management
cehle@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1484

FARM & VOCATIONAL SERVICES

Jeff Kratochwill • Director, FARM & Vocational Services
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 • 608.279.9437
Paul Untiet • Rural Rehabilitation Specialist
puntiet@eastersealswisconsin.com • 715.347.4093
Lauren Byrnes • Self-Employment Services Specialist
lbyrnes@eastersealswisconsin.com • 920.360.0373
Julie Jensen • Self-Employment Services Specialist
jjensen@eastersealswisconsin.com • 920.360.0373
Melba Brown • Technical Assistant
mbrown@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1446

FINANCE

Pam Ivers • Chief Financial Officer
pivers@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1387
Kim Feiner • HR Coordinator/Accounting Assistant
kfeiner@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1380

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Stacey Murnighan • Director, Marketing & Communications
smurnighan@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1479
Mary Statz • Marketing & Development Specialist
mstatz@eastersealswisconsin.com • 608.237.1520

Easterseals Wisconsin
8001 Excelsior Drive, Suite 200
Madison, Wisconsin 53717

Easterseals Wisconsin News

Welcome to Our New Staff Members!



Lauren Byrnes joined Easterseals Wisconsin as a Self-Employment Services Specialist. In this position she works with individuals with disabilities who are pursuing self-employment as their vocational goal and assists in choosing an enterprise that would accommodate their disability. She provides assessments, feasibility studies, helps to research potential markets, assists in developing structure and possible funding needed to operate a business, and works directly with consumers to develop

business plans. Lauren is a graduate student at UW-Stout for Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling. When she's not working or studying, she enjoys hiking, traveling, or relaxing with a good movie and popcorn.



Pattie Slempek As the HelpLine Coordinator, Pattie utilizes knowledge gained over more than 30 years as an Occupational Therapist. She advocates for people with disabilities and their families on a number of local committees, seeks out funding to assist in providing disability-related equipment, and oversees the Parents-4-Parents Support Group, a HelpLine program that organizes and hosts holiday events for individuals with disabilities and their families throughout the year. She has a passion for helping others and looks

forward to using that passion in her new position. Pattie enjoys gardening with her husband and spending time with family and friends traveling, hiking and camping.



Brenda Nelson joined Easterseals Wisconsin this summer as the Camp Billing Specialist. She is responsible for administrative billing operations to support the Camp department, for updating databases and maintaining accurate accounting for all Camp programs, billing responsible parties for camper fees, and maintaining accounts receivable and collections. Brenda is from St. Joseph, Missouri and just moved to Wisconsin in May. Once settled, she will continue her pursuit of a Bachelor's degree

in Elementary Education/Special Education, complementing her desire to work with people with disabilities. She has one son, loves seafood, crocheting and math.

The Nerenhausen Family

For 23 years, the Nerenhausens searched for answers, trying to find a diagnosis for their daughter Leah's disability. Leah is non-verbal and uses a wheelchair. But none of the appointments with doctors or specialists, the thousands of questions answered and unanswered, the various blood tests and muscle biopsies, have yet given them the answers they seek.

But in spite of no clear diagnosis, the Nerenhausen family are, in their own words, "on an even keel." Things are going pretty well right now," says Leah's mother, Lisa Nerenhausen-Sorensen. "Leah is healthy, so we just keep pressing on."

Before 1998, Lisa had never heard of Easterseals Wisconsin. She and her husband, Brian, had two healthy boys and, until Leah's birth, had no experience caring for a loved one with disabilities. When Leah was three years old, the Nerenhausen family decided they needed some assistance. That's when they first got in touch with Easterseals Wisconsin's Disability HelpLine of Outagamie County. The HelpLine has been an important part of their lives ever since.

Over the years, Lisa has been a member of the Parents-4-Parents (P4P) support group for families caring for a loved one with disabilities. "From the very beginning, our experience with Jill [Gretzinger] was smooth and easy. She's so smart and knew all the organizations to connect us to." Gretzinger, who has since changed her role with the HelpLine to Coordinator of the Guardian Assistance Program, served as the Coordinator of the Outagamie County Disability HelpLine for more than 25 years. She has deep roots in Outagamie County communities and has been the driving force of the HelpLine, which serves hundreds of families in the area each year.

"P4P proved to be a great way to meet other parents caring for children with disabilities. Jill was there to facilitate meetings and has been a great resource for all of us," Lisa shares about the unique program.

Made possible through a trust established by the estate of Loretta K. Ricker, the Disability HelpLine of Outagamie County is located in Appleton, and provides a variety of services to Outagamie County residents with disabilities including:

- Information and referral
- Grants to individuals
- Parents-4-Parents support group
- Guardian Assistance Program
- Community projects



Along with the P4P support group, one of the most helpful projects Easterseals Wisconsin has helped with was the installation of an accessible entryway to accommodate the wheelchair ramp for Leah.

"As Leah has gotten older, so have we," laughs Lisa. "The accessible entryway makes it much easier on all of us."

"Having this community of people in our lives has been such a blessing. We've especially realized how invaluable the HelpLine is over this past year." As Leah moved into adulthood and Lisa and Brian took on the role as her financial guardians, the HelpLine's Guardian Assistance Program has been a tremendous help.

"Learning how to handle her finances and estate has been more involved than we had imagined," says Lisa. "And we're so grateful the HelpLine added this program a few years ago. Jill explained every aspect of the responsibilities of a guardian and walked us through the documents we needed to complete for the county. The Guardian Assistance Program isn't a program that someone would need to use every month, but knowing it's there and someone can help you is such a relief. It's wonderful to know someone is there to look out for you."

The Nerenhausen family will continue to fight for Leah, in hopes that a diagnosis will finally reveal itself and possibly open up the door to steps that could help her. A clear diagnosis would, for genetic reasons, also be helpful to her brothers.

Exploring Job Options in Rural Wisconsin



Our thanks to Port Fish for allowing us to tour their Knellsville facility where they experiment with alternative growing systems, including aquaponics and hydroponics.

Since 2017, Easterseals Wisconsin's FARM Program has been working with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to provide a unique learning experience for high school students with disabilities. Exploring Job Options in Rural Wisconsin is a course focusing on the many and varied career possibilities available in the Agriculture industry, offering participating students the ability to focus of their areas of interest. The FARM Program continues to partner with Camp Wawbeek, providing the course to Transitions campers four times each year.

This past year, tours of different ag-related businesses were done virtually due to COVID-19 protocols, but as restrictions eased, we were able to conduct an in-person tour to Port Fish, a farm growing vegetables through an aquaponics system. Speakers have also joined in these classes virtually, including a farmer with disabilities, an agronomist, and a vet tech who also does animal therapy and acupuncture. The student who met in person for the course had the opportunity to hear from a Conservation Warden who joined the class in person as a speaker.

The FARM Program is looking forward to joining Camp Wawbeek in a Young Adult/Transitions week-long session later this summer. With the new virtual option for the course, a marketing push was made, and interest has increased from around the state. We are very excited to see where this course will go and to continue conversations with interested individuals. To learn more, contact Ami Cooper, Farm Rural Rehabilitation Specialist, at acooper@eastersealswisconsin.com or at 608.225.1867.

Otto Bremer Trust Grant



Easterseals Wisconsin's FARM Program was recently awarded a \$30,000 grant from the Otto Bremer Trust. Farmers with disabilities, whether due to injury, chronic illness, or debilitating conditions, in Bremer Bank communities in Northwest Wisconsin and throughout the state will benefit from the generosity of the philanthropic group.

"We are delighted to once again partner with the Otto Bremer Trust to help meet the ever-increasing demand for vocational rehabilitation services within the agricultural community here in Wisconsin," says Paul Leverenz, Easterseals Wisconsin President & CEO.

"Empowering people to sustain their way of life, not only for themselves but for their families, is why we do what we do at Easterseals Wisconsin. For nonprofits to receive support such as this from private investment proves that our communities are strongest when working together."

The Otto Bremer Trust is a bank holding company and a private charitable trust based in Saint Paul, Minnesota, that works at the intersection of finance and philanthropy. Created in 1944 by Otto Bremer, it is today one of the nation's largest philanthropic organizations and is committed to supporting a better quality of life for residents of Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. The Trust is the majority owner of Bremer Financial Corporation, a regional financial services company; manages a diversified investment portfolio; and operates Community Benefit Financial Company, a financial resources subsidiary.

Since its founding, Otto Bremer Trust has invested more than \$841 million in people, places, and opportunities in the Upper Midwest.

Join Us! Sporting Clays Fundraiser

Presented by



Wednesday, September 22, 2021
Registration: 7:00 - 8:00 AM
Milford Hills Hunt Club
W5670 French Road
Johnson Creek, WI 53038

Sponsored by ErgoFactor, the 2nd Annual Sporting Clays Fundraiser will be held Wednesday, September 22, 2021 at the Milford Hills Hunt Club, in Johnson Creek, Wisconsin. A great success in 2020, the event will once again be hosted online and is currently accepting teams and sponsorships at various levels. Team sponsorships are only \$500!

Up to 100 shooters can participate. Each shooter will be on a team of four, with a maximum of 25 teams. Beginners are welcome and an introductory course will be provided.

To learn more or to participate by sponsoring a team, a station game, or providing a donation to be used for the auction/raffle day of, please contact Rachel Reichhoff by phone at 608.212.0290 or by email rreichhoff@eastersealswisconsin.com.

**All proceeds benefit
Easterseals Wisconsin**

Skip Ellenbecker Memorial Golf Outing



Thank you, everyone!

The annual Skip Ellenbecker Memorial Golf Outing was held on Friday, August 13th at Pine Valley Golf Course in Marathon. After missing a year due to COVID, golfers were happy to be back on the course, honoring Skip's memory by helping to raise more than \$22,000 to support the Easterseals Wisconsin FARM Program.

The planning committee did an outstanding job of garnering sponsorships and building connections and relationships with companies who are supportive of the FARM Program, including first-year sponsors Fabick Cat and 3M.

**Our
Presenting
Sponsors**



Thank you, Century 21 Dairyland Realty!

Over the past 18 years, Century 21 Dairyland Realty in Medford has raised tens of thousands of dollars for Easterseals Wisconsin through their agency-run Volleyball Tournament, Bump It Up! Thank you so much to those who organize this great event and to everyone who has participated in it over the years! Your generous spirits and dedication are deeply appreciated!



(Left to right) Event organizers Sharon Olson, Cameron Rau, Dan Olson, Carlie Rau, and Kelly Kleist.

Tito's Greenhouse

Love, Tito's is the philanthropic arm of Tito's Handmade Vodka. Each member of Team Tito's is empowered to give back to causes, efforts and organizations that inspire them with the overarching goal to "Turn Spirits Into Love & Goodness." Tito's is a long-time Easterseals Wisconsin donor, having supported us through our Annual Campaign and golf outings. This past year, with a focus on sustainability, they approached us about funding a greenhouse at Camp Wawbeek, an idea that was met with great enthusiasm!

"The greenhouse is a project we've wanted to do for some time," says Alex Peters, Director of Camp Wawbeek. "We hope to use it to start seeds for flowers to be planted around camp and to grow herbs and some vegetables for our kitchen."

Giving back has been part of the Tito's story since the very beginning, when Tito was asked to donate a couple of cases of vodka to a nonprofit fundraiser in Austin, Texas in the late 90s. Since then, the company has given back to and engaged in tens of thousands of nonprofit sponsorships through *Love, Tito's*. What started as local gestures has become a nationwide movement to make the world a better place!



AmeriCorps

This summer, we are very happy to have welcomed 17 AmeriCorps members who served at Easterseals Wisconsin Camp Wawbeek and Wisconsin Elks/ Easterseals Wisconsin Respite Camp.

Our AmeriCorps members come from across the country and beyond to serve a term of National Service with our camp program. These members provide personal care and lead or support camper participation in a wide variety of recreation activities at camp. They are an integral part of our camps, ensuring campers have a successful and enriching experience.

Even during COVID-eliminated camp sessions, AmeriCorps members continued their service, providing alternate experiences to our campers. They compiled virtual programs via social media platforms that campers could enjoy from home, completed service projects, picked up trash at local parks, learned new skills to make face masks, coordinated hygiene bags for community members, and utilized leadership training resources. We're so proud of our AmeriCorps members and all they accomplished during these unprecedented times!

If you or someone you know is interested applying, or learning more about the program, please contact Anna Korb at akorb@eastersealswisconsin.com, or visit the AmeriCorps website at www.americorps.gov.



Golf Outing for Kids



(Left to right) Easterseals Wisconsin President & CEO Paul Leverenz, Camp Wawbeek camper Stacy Opsal, and Carleen Wild.

The Golf Outing for Kids, once again presented by Bank of Wisconsin Dells, had a new look and feel this year after being absent from our calendars last year.

With an eye to keeping golfers and staff safe during the ongoing pandemic, significant changes were made to the schedule and to event details. At both Wild Rock Golf Club and Trappers Turn, registration was streamlined and several on-course games were eliminated, Wild Rock also offered both a morning and an afternoon flight of golf. In addition, the traditional cookout at Camp Wawbeek following the day on the course was not held.

Despite changes, the event was well-received. Teams enjoyed the opportunity to explore new approaches, and were happy to provide feedback at the end of the day.

The event was a great success, netting just over \$166,000! The funds will be used to support Camp Wawbeek and Wisconsin Elks/Easterseals Wisconsin Respite Camp.

Our thanks to everyone who helped make this great event possible!

Golf Outing for Kids Committee Members

Andy Crooks
Joe Gussel
Zach Morley
Joy Royston
Pat Stein
Chris Tancill

Diamond & Gold Event Sponsors

Bank of Wisconsin Dells
ErgoFactor
Holiday Wholesale
Wild Rock Golf Club
Wilderness Resort

Delta Dental
JustAgame Fieldhouse
Kalahari Resorts
Kraemer Brothers, LLC
Krantz Electric, Inc.
Lincoln Financial Advisors
Log Gables
Neuman Pools
Park Bank
Tito's Handmade Vodka

Annual Campaign

While we had to forego the kickoff event for our Annual Campaign due to COVID, our Marketing Director created touching and informative videos for each of our major programs to help our volunteer fundraisers meet – and exceed – our campaign goals. We're so fortunate to have a great group of fundraising ambassadors and an equally dedicated group of kickoff event sponsors who made their contributions despite the cancellation of the kickoff event itself. **Thank you all!**

Our Ambassadors

Matt Bernstein	Paul Karch	Joy Royston
Pam Birschbach	Jason Klawonn	Sara Schoenborn
Chuck Buell	Pat LeMire	Scott Stevenson
Wayne Corey	Rick Lonigro	John Teevan
Andy Crooks	Lisa Mohar	Bob Weber
Fred Delmenhorst	Paul Molinaro	
Jerry & Mary Foellmi	Zach Morley	
Pat Jennings	Rod & Patsy Opsal Family	



Event Sponsors

First Weber Foundation
Team First Weber
Madison Lighting
Lincoln Financial Advisors
Northwestern Mutual
DeLaval
KleenMark

USDA Grant

Easterseals Wisconsin FARM Program's USDA Socially-Disadvantaged Outreach Grant was awarded in 2019 to serve socially-disadvantaged farmers over a three-year period.

The FARM staff continues to partner with UW-Extension with the long-term goal of enhancing the profitability and sustainability of Hmong, veteran, and other socially-disadvantaged farmers in Wisconsin by providing outreach to help them access USDA programs. Agricultural education opportunities continue to be made possible through agricultural exploration classes, safety days, and targeted presentations.

The 2501 Program (also known as the Outreach and Assistance for Socially-Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program) was created through the 1990 Farm Bill to help farmers, ranchers, and foresters who have historically experienced limited access to USDA loans, grants, training, and technical assistance. The 2014 Farm Bill expanded the program's reach to veterans.

To learn more, contact FARM Program Director Jeff Kratochwill:
608.279.9436
jkratochwill@eastersealswisconsin.com