

DISABILITY RIGHTS WISCONSIN

PAY ATTENTION.

2009 REPORT TO COMMUNITY

PAY ATTENTION.

Inside Report 2009

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Disability Rights pays attention

Protection and advocacy requires vigilance. It takes listening for problems, recognizing the consequences and then acting for positive change. Disability Rights Wisconsin knows what it means to pay attention.

Unwavering in our commitment to fight for what is right and fair for people with disabilities, Disability Rights focused last year on projects and collaborations that are prime examples of paying attention. We defended and promoted individual rights, helped people attain their dreams and contributed to far-reaching coalition efforts.

The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force is one of those efforts. Disability Rights helped start the task force six years ago and since then, the task force has managed to bring together more than 40 major groups determined as one to face down discrimination against people with mental illness in every area of life. It's an alliance with impact.

In another area, Disability Rights is developing an internal coalition of sorts with the Family Care and IRIS Ombudsman Program. This important advocacy team completed its first full year in operation in 2009, helping adults with disabilities under age 60 get the services they need through Wisconsin's Family Care and IRIS long-term care programs. Disability Rights ombudsmen are located across the state and, as you'll learn in these pages, they're achieving great momentum.

Nothing represents Disability Rights' statewide impact like the vital presence of our NW Wisconsin office in Rice Lake. What started as a one-issue, one-person effort back in 2003, today is seen across the region—and by the rest of Disability Rights—as the “go-to” resource for consumers, families and others serving people with disabilities up north. The office became full service in 2009 and we report here on how they pay attention and work for change in the region.

Finally, the *2009 Report* showcases an ongoing Board-led outreach effort that's transformed the connection Disability Rights has with the people we serve and Wisconsin's disability movement. From the first Listening Session we held in Rice Lake in 2005 to the most recent one in Racine, these informal community “give-and-takes” have raised important issues and strengthened our resolve to address them.

Every chance to listen and learn—to pay attention—is important to us. It's something Board leaders, the professionals who work for Disability Rights and our valued partners in advocacy do instinctively. The milestones of 2009 are proof that whether we use what we learn to help one person gain more independence or to improve the system's response to everyone, Disability Rights Wisconsin keeps what's important in focus.



Lynn Breedlove
Executive Director



Mary Lynn Larson
Board President 2009-2010



Even the odds in long-term care

ALEX SZELE



Disability Rights’ Family Care group, left to right, Betsy Abramson, Sarah Pitsoulakis, Jennifer Borgh, Teresa Clark, Penelope Groth and Jamie Miller.

The bigger the system, the harder it is for individuals to be heard. Disability Rights Wisconsin knows this scenario well and works to overcome it on many fronts. In a program that advocates for a group of people with disabilities who receive state-supported long-term care, the organization puts its knowledge and networks together to accomplish exactly that.

The Family Care and IRIS Ombudsman Program (FCIOP) advocates for individuals age 18 to 59 who are enrolled in Wisconsin’s Family Care and IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-Direct) programs. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) contracted with Disability Rights two years ago to run the program, helping participants achieve fair and reasonable access to services and supports that foster individual independence and quality of life.

Wisconsin’s approach to long-term care reform started nine years ago with pilot programs in five counties. In 2009, Family Care expanded to 48 Wisconsin counties, now 55. Together with IRIS, it provides members with coordinated care that follows them wherever they live. Disability Rights adds an independent

voice to the equation, promoting and protecting individual interests in a large, complicated system.

Constructive and collaborative

Betsy Abramson is the Family Care and IRIS Ombudsman Program (FCIOP) Manager for Disability Rights. She says Disability Rights’ tradition of individual advocacy and emphasis on helping people maintain their independence makes the ombudsman role a natural fit.

Managed care organizations (MCOs) with Family Care contracts assign a care manager and nurse to work with enrollees, identifying what they want to achieve and which services will help them succeed. Abramson says FCIOP uses collaborative problem solving to help consumers understand those benefit options and negotiate the best outcomes. “Our approach involves helping them explore their goals in life, work, health, social activities—everything that matters—and align those with the mix of services and supports they need to get there.”

FCIOP built its capacity in 2009, hiring skilled advocates and doing outreach about the program to consumers and providers. By the end of the year, there were ombudsmen in every Disability Rights office—Jamie Miller and Penelope Groth in Milwaukee, Teresa Clark in Madison and Jennifer Borgh in the Rice Lake office. Attorney Sarah Pitsoulakis joined FCIOP to provide legal backup and advocacy.

These professionals have valuable experience in disability issues and a commitment to increasing their knowledge of how the redesigned programs function. They provide consumers with information about eligibility requirements, allowable services and supports, and their rights under Family Care and IRIS—especially important in counties where the programs are new.

The advocates also investigate complaints, resolve and mediate service issues, and represent consumers filing a grievance

or requesting a hearing. Issues the ombudsmen addressed with and for consumers in 2009 include:

- reduction in service hours
- termination of eligibility
- denial of coverage for assistive devices
- denial or termination of medication or therapy
- development of self-directed care plans under IRIS
- access to meaningful work opportunities

Groth says the challenge is helping enough consumers, including those who will never contact Disability Rights about their Family Care. “When I help one person resolve an issue, I

see it as a chance to change how the system responds the next time,” she notes. “When that happens, a single result benefits everyone.”

Address the imbalance

FCIOP’s work had an impact for people with disabilities in 2009. “In only one year, we started to see the positive effects of having a team of advocates dedicated to Family Care and IRIS,” says Disability Rights Wisconsin Executive Director Lynn Breedlove. “They grasp the complexities of these programs and

continued next page

FCIOP CASE STUDIES

Support for family caregiver

Her mother is the primary caregiver for a 40-year-old woman who has a developmental disability. When the woman’s Family Care team decided to reduce from six to three-and-a-half the number of hours per day the mother was reimbursed for supervising her daughter’s sometimes challenging behavior, the family appealed the change, but to no avail. FCIOP advocate Jamie Miller got involved to represent the interests of the Family Care member in a hearing. Miller gathered evidence from doctors and others to argue the case for a higher level of reimbursement. The hearing judge reversed the Family Care decision and approved an increase to seven hours of reimbursed care per day. The family says the details Jamie prepared for the hearing went beyond what they could do on their own. “If you don’t have somebody to back you, it’s a losing battle,” the care-giving mother adds. “The result was better than I could have imagined.”

Change for the better

A 27-year-old woman with cystic fibrosis depends on a percussion vest to prevent the build up of thick mucus that is a consequence of her condition. When her Family Care-funded MCO denied several requests to replace a heavy 37-pound vest the member had used since high school with a 17-pound model that is more portable and maximizes her mobility and independence, she contacted Disability Rights Wisconsin for help. At a grievance hearing, Disability Rights Advocacy Specialist Karen Lane, who took the Family Care case, presented detailed medical documentation, and quoted federal and state rules that favor independence and self-care. The consumer demonstrated use of her old therapy vest and, together, they convinced the MCO to approve purchase of the much lighter replacement. “This therapy is really important for keeping my lungs healthy and for my overall well-being,” the young woman says. “Disability Rights helped me make a good case for the new vest. Thanks to them, I have one now that I can carry on my own and easily use at work or when traveling.”

Communicating a need

Suffering from a progressive degenerative disease that affects her ability to enunciate and reduces her voice to a whisper most of the time, a 54-year-old woman requested a pair of communication devices to get the attention of her care providers when she cannot make visual contact. Her MCO first approved then denied approval for the devices, citing a complication with her enrollment in hospice. FCIOP advocate Teresa Clark intervened and got the approval renewed. The MCO then refused to cover the costs of training, suggesting the member call the manufacturer’s 800 number for assistance, an impossible alternative for her under the circumstances. Disability Rights pressed the issue again and secured support for the appropriate training sessions. The consumer says FCIOP’s advocacy effort truly turned around a difficult quality-of-life situation for her. “As my illness progresses, it is important to me to save what voice I have to communicate with loved ones. Disability Rights was my voice when I had none to spare.”

are prepared to help consumers understand their right to decide and ask for the right services, a principle that lies at the heart of Disability Rights' mission."

Breedlove adds that FCIOF moderates the *imbalance* of power between Family Care members and the MCOs that deliver the benefits. The small number of MCOs serving the program statewide creates a system so vast, people risk getting lost trying to navigate it. FCIOF is there to take the consumer's side.

This includes being realistic about finding alternatives that meet the MCO-imposed cost restraints, Abramson says. The FCIOF group has constructive relationships with both the county Aging and Disability Resource Centers that provide options counseling and determine eligibility for the long-term care programs and with the MCOs, a strategy that makes it easier to resolve most issues early.

FCIOF also works to improve how the system serves members by alerting DHS to inconsistencies or errors in administering the programs. FCIOF Attorney Pitsoulakis drew attention to a problem with Family Care Notices of Action last year where each MCO was following a different process but few met federal requirements. DHS reviewed the issue and instituted a policy that achieves compliance and consistency.

Network of resources

FCIOF continues to increase its outreach efforts to match or stay ahead of the rollout of Family Care and IRIS to more counties. The goal is to spread awareness about the ombudsman program and identify Disability Rights as the contact point for consumers under age 60 who are having problems with Family Care or IRIS. The FCIOF group regularly connects with family support groups, disability organizations, schools with transition programs, personal care workers, independent living centers and others.

Active safeguard

Disability Rights' experience with FCIOF in 2009 shows that if the Family Care and IRIS principles of giving people better choices, improving access to quality long-term care services and creating a cost-effective system is going to work, it depends on giving members a voice. "Disability Rights is the most active safeguard for people with disabilities under 60 who need to find their way through lots of complex new rules," Breedlove says. "We're helping to even the odds for them and challenging Family Care to live up to its mission." ■

RICE LAKE OFFICE GROWTH

Reduce barriers to access and

Opening its third office in 2003 gave Disability Rights Wisconsin the opportunity to establish a local presence in the northwest region of the state. From a limited focus on transportation issues that first year to handling the full range of Disability Rights priorities in 2009, the Rice Lake office has become a force for the rights of people with disabilities throughout the region.

Disability Rights Executive Director Lynn Breedlove recalls talking with leaders in the disability community in northwestern Wisconsin nearly a decade ago about how to have a greater impact in a part of the state where services and access were historically inconsistent or nonexistent.

"Disability Rights started small but with plans to make a long-term commitment in northwestern Wisconsin," Breedlove says. "We quickly saw how determined Disability Rights staff members in the Rice Lake office managed, from the first, to make a serious dent in the barriers marginalizing people with disabilities in that region."

The response has been dramatic. In 2009, the northwest office received 222 individual requests for assistance, almost double the number from the previous year.

Rice Lake Office Director and Attorney Eugenia Hedlund says such growth shows that Disability Rights is making inroads in the region—despite the challenge of the area's far-flung geography. Justly famed for its miles of wilderness and secluded beauty, the northwest part of Wisconsin is a place where resources that can give people with disabilities a fair hope of independence, equality and quality of life are harder to identify or benefit from.

Reflecting reality

Rice Lake staff members are the primary Disability Rights contact for consumers, family members, other disability groups and agencies in 17 counties and on five Indian reservations. Along with Hedlund, the group includes Advocacy Specialists Karen Lane and Jo Pelishek, Attorney Abby Mayer, Administrative/Intake Specialist April Kieler, and Family Care and IRIS Ombudsman Jennifer Borgh.

Advocacy Specialist Rick Pelishek, who retired last year,

equality in northwestern Wisconsin

was Disability Rights' first staff member in northwest Wisconsin. His diligence and coalition building laid the foundation for how the organization serves the region.

"Our approach reflects the realities of how isolated people feel here," Hedlund explains. "Getting answers and services is complicated by the fact that many people seeking our help don't have access to the Internet or adequate transportation."

Today, people know to call the Rice Lake office for many of those answers. The office facilitates lots of referrals, connecting callers quickly to the right resource. The advocates rely on Disability Rights colleagues in Madison and Milwaukee to assist on issues that come up. But largely they depend on local resources and a growing number of coalitions throughout the region to meet the needs of callers.

An example is Hedlund's collaboration last year with North Country Independent Living Center in Superior that resulted in a local contracted provider of paratransit adding another bus to its fleet, improving service to consumers.

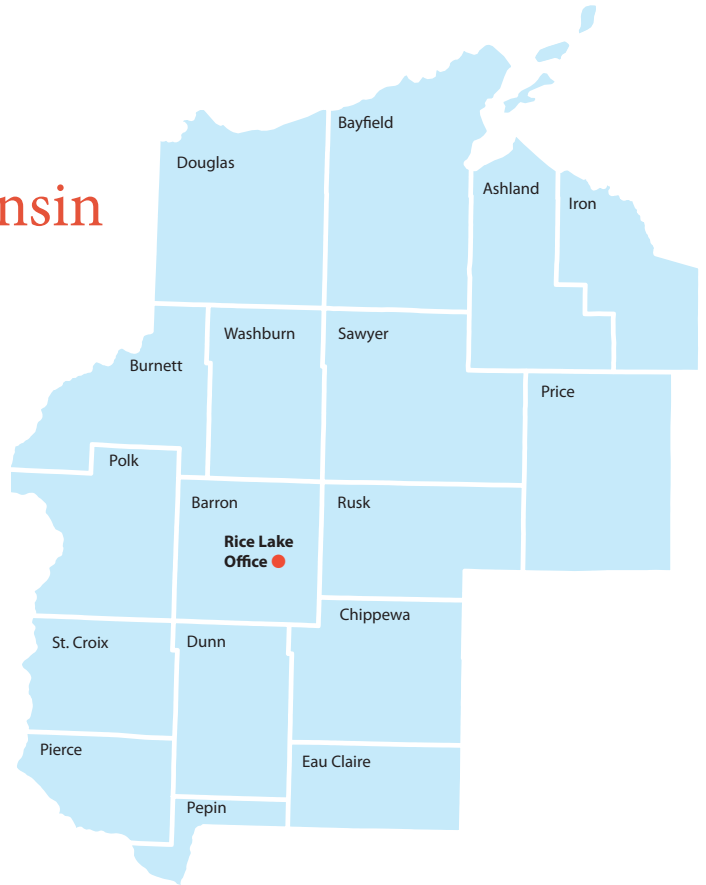
Gain people's trust

Providing front-line information has put Disability Rights on the map in northwestern Wisconsin. But individual advocacy and face-to-face communication are the keys to gaining people's trust.

"Being present, being wherever we needed to be in the region, is how we started six years ago to build the coalitions that continue to be so important," says Lane, who joined the agency's Rice Lake office the year after it opened. "It's not easy to stretch the organization across such a large area but we're motivated to make it work."

Lane cites her collaboration with advocates in the Ashland/Bayfield area on issues of violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women as an example. The program helps groups that serve victims of domestic violence and sexual assault improve their capacity to provide *all* women with accessible, supportive services.

Reaching out to the Native American community is another example of how important it is to have advocates nearby. The Rice Lake office worked with consultant Mike MacDonald



The Rice Lake office brings Disability Rights support to 17 counties in northwestern Wisconsin.

Staff members in Disability Rights' Rice Lake office stand together, clockwise from front, Genie Hedlund, Karen Lane, Jo Pelishek, Abby Mayer, April Kieler and Jennifer Borgh.



KATIE WILDER

who provided education advocacy and outreach through the contracts Disability Rights has with tribes in Wisconsin. “His connections opened the way for us,” Hedlund notes.

Advocacy, systems change and training

As in other parts of the state, Disability Rights protection and advocacy efforts in the Rice Lake office range from school issues, fair housing and accessibility to equal opportunity in employment, voting rights and more. With the expansion of Family Care and IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-Direct) into northwestern counties, Borgh is busy helping people as they join the state’s long-term care programs.

Educating consumers, family members, care providers, school administrators and teachers, law enforcement and other groups is important to Disability Rights’ collaborative approach in northwestern Wisconsin. The Rice Lake office conducts training programs in self-advocacy, mental health recovery

concepts, transition services, functional assessment of behavior, advocacy ethics, accessibility requirements and more.

Funding and advocacy partnerships

Early support from the St. Paul-based Bremer Foundation gave Disability Rights the push it needed to create a strong advocacy network in northwestern Wisconsin. Breedlove and Hedlund say the partnership, which continues with additional funds from the Foundation in 2010, represents an important shared commitment to helping people claim their rights and participate in community life.

The network of funding and advocacy partnerships Disability Rights Wisconsin is developing in northwestern Wisconsin parallels the growing impact of the Rice Lake office. The fact “we are here to stay,” says Breedlove, signals recognition of the organization’s chance to achieve positive changes in the lives of many more people. ■

ADVOCACY PARTNERS IN NW WISCONSIN WELCOME DISABILITY RIGHTS

“Proximity is crucial. Having a Disability Rights office in northwestern Wisconsin creates a strong advocacy presence for people with disabilities in the region. And it’s not just about individual cases. It’s about working together to develop the system of the future.”

*Paul Cook, Executive Director,
Community Health Partnership*

“Disability Rights Wisconsin’s presence and impact in northwestern Wisconsin has increased tremendously since they opened the Rice Lake office. They’ve become a primary source for information and advocacy assistance, and been very supportive of our efforts and our regional coalitions.”

*Linda Jorgenson, Retired Associate
Director, New Horizons North*

“People with disabilities here get more immediate attention since Disability Rights Wisconsin opened its Rice Lake office. The organization is invaluable to us in its capacity to conduct abuse investigations and advocate for people who are victims of abuse. And it’s great to have advocates locally who really know Family Care.”

*Ruth Gulerud, Executive Director,
United Cerebral Palsy of West
Central Wisconsin*

“There are many people with disabilities in northern Wisconsin who badly need the assistance of an independent advocacy agency like Disability Rights Wisconsin. Their commitment to the north is clear. They’ve joined our efforts on housing, helped make local domestic violence and sexual assault programs more accessible, and are working with us on Family Care issues.”

*Stewart Holman, Independent Living
Specialist, North County Independent
Living Center*

MILWAUKEE MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE

Connect people to community

Coalition efforts that spark change and earn the support of major funders are vital to the success of what Disability Rights Wisconsin is about. That is how Barbara Beckert describes the work of the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force (MHTF).

As Director of Disability Rights' Milwaukee office, Beckert represents the organization on the MHTF. Founded in 2004 by advocacy and service groups that agreed a lack of awareness and scarce resources were creating a crisis in mental health services in Milwaukee County, the task force continued strong in 2009.

Raising awareness of issues that all people affected by mental illness face and advocating for improvements in the services they receive was a powerful incentive for joining forces, Beckert says. From different vantage points, task force members saw the system's failure to link consumers to community services and supports that emphasize recovery. They were mobilized by the need to overcome barriers to service and the stigma attached to mental illness.

Working for change

Disability Rights championed creation of the MHTF, administers the task force budget and coordinates its day-to-day operations. Today, more than 45 member organizations representing consumers, advocates, provider groups and health care systems, legal aid, law enforcement, social service agencies and other groups bring a range of insights to the MHTF along with a willingness to work together for change. Led by a steering committee that reflects the community its members serve, the task force has an enviable reputation for turning good ideas into action.

The task force helped lead implementation of several successful initiatives that address fundamental problems facing people with mental illness. These include Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for nearly 400 city and county law enforcement personnel to date and a Crisis Intervention Partners network that extends CIT to emergency medical personnel, health care professionals and correctional officers. The MHTF also assisted with implementation of a Crisis Resource Center (CRC), now part of Transitional Living Services, which helps people with



The Wisconsin Warrior Summit, co-hosted in October 2009 by Disability Rights and other MHTF members, drew hundreds of combat veterans and their families.

mental illness stay out of the criminal justice system.

Disability Rights Executive Director Lynn Breedlove recalls that before the MHTF, mental health advocacy efforts in Milwaukee were fragmented, diluting their impact. "Then all the major groups and agencies working on problems faced by people with mental illness became part of the MHTF. Now when they choose a priority, something substantial happens."

Successful connections

Community connections are central to the success of the MHTF, from services to financial support. Over four years, the

continued next page

task force received grants from individual funds managed by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, including the Locke A. Sprague and Community Grant funds in 2009. Beckert says backing from the Foundation went beyond dollars to a valuable collaborative effort that brought other funders to the table, ensuring the success of the CRC among other projects.

The MHTF's annual Summit gives the mental health advocacy community the chance to connect with and learn from each other. Last year, the task force co-hosted a Wisconsin Warrior Summit with mental health and veteran-service organizations—including MHTF member Dryhooch of America, a Milwaukee-based group working statewide to address the mental health needs of combat veterans and their families. The event played to an overflow crowd and gave visibility to the service needs of returning veterans and their families. The focus for 2010 is *Mental Health: Race, Ethnicity, Culture*.

Another important project for Disability Rights and the MHTF last year was participation in design of the adult mental health system in Milwaukee County. Beckert and Lynn Malofsky of Warmline, a non-crisis peer support line for people with mental illness, helped bring the consumer viewpoint to the discussion of how to make better use of limited resources. The MHTF convened three community meetings to document consumer concerns, including one held in association with the Latino Health Coalition and conducted in Spanish.

Transformative role

Looking ahead, the MHTF is committed to using the strength of its numbers to overcome discrimination and inadequate attention to a population that deserves better options.

"Influencing change at this level, being part of the solution, is an important and transformative role for the MHTF," Beckert notes. "Our members understand the issues and are united in finding better approaches to providing recovery-centered services for people with mental illness." ■

BOARD LISTENING SESSIONS

Get people talking

Find out what is happening around the state, get people talking. That was the basic goal when the Board of Disability Rights Wisconsin held its first Listening Session in Rice Lake as an add-on to a regular Board meeting in June 2005. The plan was to engage the local community and let the volunteer leaders hear firsthand about the disability challenges people face where they live. Five years and 15 Listening Sessions later, the impact of these structured but informal gatherings is immense.

"It's one of the best examples of what it means to be on this board," says Board President Mary Lynn Larson of Appleton. "The sessions really focus our discussions, cause us to think hard about every issue and make decisions for guiding the agency based on what's really going on in people's lives everywhere around the state."

Three or four times a year now, the Disability Rights Board picks a different location in the state for a Listening Session. They invite people with disabilities, their families, disability activists and others to attend and speak about current disability issues and future advocacy challenges. Larson says the top issues vary depending on where in the state the session takes place, but transportation, mental health services, education, employment and long-term care frequently make the list.

Board members bring diverse backgrounds to their leadership role for Disability Rights. People with disabilities, family members and advocates from across Wisconsin are at the table and, to a person, enthusiastic about the Listening Sessions. "Because of our own experiences, we can relate to many of the stories people tell

"People with mental illness don't exist here... there is a lot of stigma, we are not accepted as part of the community."

"Individuals with disabilities wind up in the criminal justice system because their needs are not addressed. There is a lack of choice and long waits for psychiatrists."

"Deaf/Hard of Hearing people experience problems [in the health care system] regarding advocacy, accessibility, quality and sensitivity because there is a lack of qualified interpreters and trained personnel."

“Some tribal members hesitate to get on Family Care because it will result in a sizable cost share.” and sometimes offer solutions,” Larson explains. “And I’ve developed a great network over the years of people who addressed a Listening Session. We all benefit.”

Even the advocacy specialists and attorneys on staff at Disability Rights, who work every day with individual or systems issues, learn from the Listening Sessions. Disability Rights’ Executive Director Lynn Breedlove says it is a forum where trends can emerge or a case that is part of a bigger effort comes to light. But the Listening Sessions belong to the Board most of all, he notes, and reflect their commitment to the Disability Rights mission.

“Our Board is in a class by themselves when it comes to understanding aspects of all the disability issues we contend with and the Listening Sessions have a lot to do with that,” says Breedlove. “Board members make each of these sessions meaningful, ensuring that everyone who attends feels welcome and is heard.” ■



Participants at Disability Rights’ Listening Sessions speak up about issues that concern them.

ISSUES RAISED AT LISTENING SESSIONS

- Access to mental health services
- Excessive school expulsions and suspensions
- Access to attorney services
- Affordable housing
- Waiting lists for services
- Quality of services across counties
- Respect for people with disabilities
- Qualified interpreters for Deaf/hard of hearing students
- Support for Native American families and children
- Fair pay for meaningful work
- Better transportation options
- Crisis intervention and the criminal justice system
- Approval for assistive technology devices



In memorium

Michael MacDonald: 1955–2010



Children with disabilities and Disability Rights Wisconsin lost a dedicated advocate with the death on October 14, 2010, of Advocacy Consultant Michael MacDonald.

MacDonald worked for nearly two decades helping families learn what is possible and overcoming the barriers that limit their child's access to special education services. In that time and through his long association with Disability Rights, his efforts made a difference for more than 1,000 Native American students with disabilities.

Known on the reservations as a soft-spoken powerhouse who came prepared to make things happen, MacDonald's acceptance by the tribes and the commitment he shared with Disability Rights to achieve what is right and fair made him a valuable colleague, says Disability Rights Executive Director Lynn Breedlove.

Earlier this year, as MacDonald struggled with characteristic quiet energy against his illness, the tribes and Disability Rights paid tribute to him and his role in raising awareness about the education rights of Native American children with disabilities. The Lac Courte Oreilles tribe hosted a recognition luncheon for MacDonald in June 2010 where Jeff Spitzer-Resnick, Managing Attorney with Disability Rights, presented him with a proclamation from the organization's Board acknowledging MacDonald's tremendous legacy of advocacy for Native American school children.

Disability Rights tapped MacDonald's commitment to children and his strong connection to the state's Native American tribes beginning in 1997. He was a key partner in a continuing outreach effort that produced agreements with the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC), and contracts with individual tribes to provide educational advocacy for children.

Spitzer-Resnick says MacDonald gave Disability Rights an important opening to provide advocacy services to an underserved population.

Deanna Baker, Director of Community Cares and the Birth to Three programs in the Lac Courte Oreilles clinic in Hayward, organized the recognition event. She had known MacDonald a

long time and saw the impact he had from up close. Baker says MacDonald gained the trust of his cohorts in the tribal clinics and the respect of parents because he was there for the kids and the families.

"He worked collaboratively with people, showed us how we can all cross over to reach an understanding," Baker adds. "But he knew his job and, even if they didn't want to hear from him, the schools knew they had to listen."

MacDonald once explained that his persistence came from a belief that when parents are involved and vocal, the schools get the message that no one is giving up on their children.

Along with the many families he helped, Disability Rights Wisconsin will miss Mike MacDonald, Spitzer-Resnick says. "But we will do what we can to carry on his legacy of inspirational advocacy and service to Native American children with disabilities." ■

Recognition

Appreciation from People First

People First Wisconsin marked its 10-year anniversary in 2009 with unique events organized and hosted by local groups affiliated with the self-advocacy organization once a month all year across the state. The celebration included giving *Appreciation Awards* to its advocacy partners. In June 2009, People First in

Disability Rights' Barbara Beckert (left) and Board Chair Mary Lynn Larson (second from right) accept agency award from Gary Arms of People First Oshkosh (center) and Mary Clare Carlson of People First Wisconsin (right).



Oshkosh gave that honor to Disability Rights Wisconsin. “It was our thanks for helping People First make our first 10 years, still strong and growing,” says People First Executive Director Mary Clare Carlson. The Award recognizes Disability Rights for being a partner with People First in championing community-based opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.

Honored by National Disability Rights Network

Disability Rights Wisconsin received national recognition in 2009 for its focus on seclusion and restraint in schools and treatment settings and participation in an investigation surrounding the case of Angellika Arndt. The 7-year-old died as the result of restraint use at a day treatment center. The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) honored Disability Rights’

protection and advocacy efforts with a *TASC Award* in combination with one presented to Angie’s foster family for their courage in stepping forward. Curt Decker, NDRN Executive Director, says Disability Rights’ work with the family put a human face on an issue that affects people with disabilities nationwide. He notes, “They did an excellent job dealing with the facts of the case and influencing the

response by the State of Wisconsin to begin addressing serious problems in the system.” Disability Rights released a report on Angie’s death in 2008, authored by Managing Attorney Kristin Kerschensteiner, entitled *A Tragic Result of a Failure to Act*.

Awards to individuals



Shirin Cabraal, Disability Rights Managing Attorney, was honored at the 2010 State Bar Convention in May with the *2009 Dan Tuchscherer Outstanding Public Interest Law Attorney Award*. Given by the Public Interest Law Section of the State Bar, the award recognized Cabraal’s “exceptional and selfless work as an attorney and advocate serving countless clients over the years.”

Disability Rights Advocacy Specialist **Elizabeth Ford**’s work on behalf of people with disabilities includes helping them navigate the complexities of government programs to achieve the best possible quality of life. In 2009, Ford received a *Quest for Excellence Award* from the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division in honor of her collaborative work on a program to relocate residents with mental illness from institutional settings to appropriate community placements.



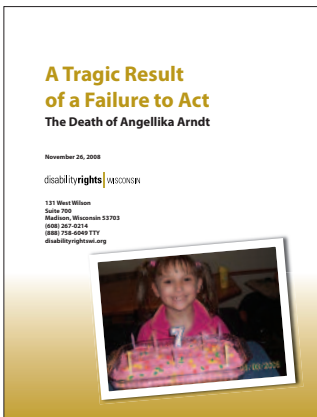
The National Council on Jewish Women-Milwaukee Section honored **Barbara Beckert**, Director of Disability Rights’ Milwaukee office, with the *Barbara Stein Building Bridges Award* in May 2009. Beckert, whose past experience includes directing



the Jewish Community Mental Health Education Project for Jewish Family Services, received the award for her coalition efforts, for helping people become strong self advocates, and keeping legislators and policymakers informed about the issues, including those of concern to people with disabilities.

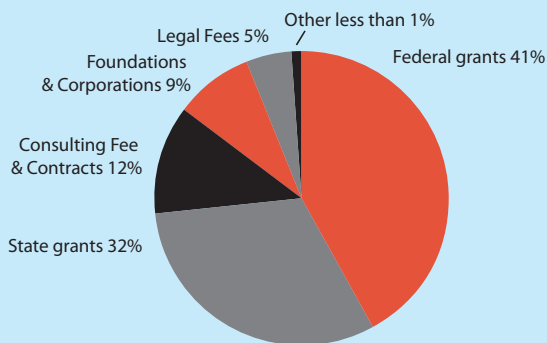


Disability Rights Supervising Attorney **Dianne Greenley**, who retired in May 2010, received a *Certificate of Commendation* from the State of Wisconsin in 2009 for her work as a member of the Health Insurance Risk-Sharing Plan board over more than 25 years. The commendation described Greenley’s service on the HIRSP board as “a model of civic responsibility” and applauded her passion for justice. It also recognized her analytical skills, leadership and tireless advocacy. ■

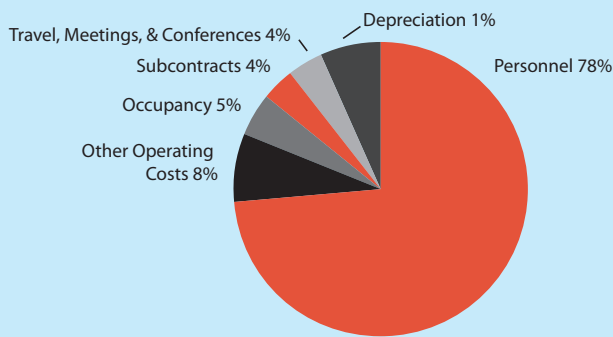


Financial and Service Highlights

Revenue FY09

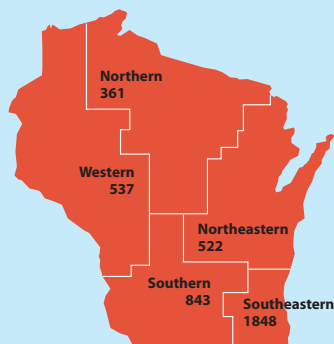


Expenses FY09



Foundation/Corporation Partners

- Equal Justice Fund
- Faye McBeath Foundation
- First Business Bank
- Greater Milwaukee Foundation
 - Locke A. Sprague Fund
 - Community Grant Fund
- M3 Insurance Solutions, Inc.
- Paragon Business Furniture Group
- Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation



Total Individuals Served Statewide in 2009

One-to-one Advocacy—4111
(see map at left)
Training/consultation—8491

Statement of Revenue and Expenses for FY09 and FY08

	FY09	FY08
Revenue		
Federal grants	1,904,758	1,981,745
State grants	1,430,425	668,194
Foundations & Corporations	406,484	435,174
Legal Fees	214,675	68,413
Consulting Fees & Contracts	520,030	465,504
Other	2,234	6,922
Revenue Total	4,478,606	3,625,952
Expenses		
Personnel	3,509,925	2,641,610
Subcontracts	158,940	119,517
Occupancy	238,255	206,143
Travel, Meetings, & Conferences	157,710	149,763
Other Operating Costs	335,295	385,116
Depreciation	52,601	42,409
Expense Total	4,452,726	3,544,558
Net Income (loss)	25,880	81,394

Statement of Financial Position for FY09 and FY08

	FY09	FY08
Assets		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	788,171	896,363
Accounts receivable	34,093	40,713
Grants receivable	673,613	453,608
Prepaid expenses	115,777	229,087
Total current assets	1,611,654	1,619,771
Property and equipment, net	325,705	308,850
Total Assets	1,937,359	1,928,621
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable	130,073	109,800
Accrued payroll	126,512	78,173
Amortized rent	3,421	3,421
Capital lease payable	5,473	5,473
Leasehold improvement payable	26,269	26,269
Accrued vacation	115,360	95,132
Grand funds received in advance	233,820	161,588
Deferred revenue	805,428	948,479
Total current liabilities	1,446,356	1,428,335
Long-term liabilities		
Amortized rent	7,412	10,833
Capital lease payable	14,368	19,841
Leasehold improvement payable	153,190	179,459
Total long-term liabilities	174,970	210,133
Total liabilities	1,621,326	1,638,468
Unrestricted net assets	316,033	290,153
Total Liabilities and net assets	1,937,359	1,928,621

Board and staff members 2009 – 2010

Board of Directors

Sandra Ahrens

Eau Claire

Ben Barrett

Trego

Tony DePerry

Solon Springs

Donald Fell

New Berlin

Rose Helms

Evansville

Jeanette Herrera

Milwaukee

Jerome Holzbauer

Milwaukee

Catherine Kunze

West Allis

Mary Lynn Larson

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Alma Mann

Janesville

James Powell

Sun Prairie

Leslie Riggs

Appleton

Frank Sterzen

Sheboygan Falls

Michelle Sturz

Evansville

Jeff Timm

Franksville

Marilyn Walczak

Milwaukee

2009 Staff

Madison Office

Betsy Abramson

Family Care & IRIS Ombudsman

Program Manager

Torey Allen

Receptionist/Clerical

Assistant II

Linda Apple

Office Manager

Anthony Baer

Staff Attorney

Molly Bandt

Managing Attorney

Kristine Beck

Administrative Specialist

Joanne Berman

Advocacy Specialist

Alicia Boehme

Advocacy Specialist

Lynn Breedlove

Executive Director

Jo Cauley

Advocacy Specialist

Teresa Clark

Family Care &

IRIS Ombudsman

Jill Gonzalez

Advocacy Specialist

Phyllis Greenberger

Advocacy Specialist

Dianne Greenley

Supervising Attorney

Mitch Hagopian

Supervising Attorney

Jodi Hanna

Supervising Attorney

Ellen Henningsen

Staff Attorney

Kim Hogan

Intake Specialist

Lisa Jameson

Receptionist/

Clerical Assistant I

Amy Judy

Violence Against Women

with Disabilities Project

Coordinator

Joan Karan

Assistant Director

Pat Kelly

Advocacy Specialist

Kristin Kerschensteiner

Managing Attorney

Jason Klimowicz

Staff Attorney

Chris L'Heureux

Advocacy Specialist

Carol Nelson

Financial Manager

Maxine Patchin

Accounting Assistant

Mike Reece

Accounting Assistant

Eva Shiffrin

Staff Attorney

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Managing Attorney

Mark Sweet

Trainer & Program Consultant

Alex Szele

Computer Support Specialist

Susan Tess

Advocacy Specialist

Todd Winstrom

Staff Attorney

Judy Zitske

*Medicare Part D Info
& Assistance Specialist*

Milwaukee

Joan Basch

Receptionist/Clerical Assistant II

Barbara Beckert

Milwaukee Office Director

Shirin Cabraal

Managing Attorney

Elise Cassidente

Office Coordinator

Joy Combs

Receptionist

Julie Dixon*Seidl

SSI Managed Care External

Advocacy Project Coordinator

Sue Endress

Advocacy Specialist

Ellen Escalera

Staff Attorney

Sally Flaschberger

Advocacy Specialist

Lisa Foley

Supervising Attorney

Elizabeth Ford

Advocacy Specialist

Alan Freed

Staff Attorney

Penelope Groth

Family Care & IRIS Ombudsman

Hope Lloyd

Advocacy Specialist

Jamie Miller

Family Care

& IRIS Ombudsman

Monica Murphy

Managing Attorney

Sarah Pitsoulakis

Staff Attorney

Ginger Rogers

Advocacy Specialist

Trishla Shah

Intake Specialist

Cathy Steffke

Advocacy Specialist

Rice Lake

Jennifer Borgh

Family Care

& IRIS Ombudsman

Eugenia Hedlund

NW Wisconsin Office Director

April Kieler

Administrative Specialist

Karen Lane

Advocacy Specialist

Abigail Mayer

Staff Attorney

Rick Pelishek

Advocacy Specialist

Students/Volunteers 2009

Neelam Dhadankar

Jana Ellingson

Jessica Erdman

Jo Futrell

Suzanne Glisch

Amanda Jorgenson

Andrew Liesner

Jonathan Longfield

Andrew Love

Laurie Mlatawou

Michael Mohr

Elizabeth Mensing

Erin Parks

Beth Stockbridge

Joined Staff in 2010

Madison

Michele Hughes

Attorney

Wanda Pagan-Diaz

Receptionist/Clerical

Assistant II

Christine Preston

Family Care & IRIS

Ombudsman

Lisa Pugh

Public Policy Coordinator

Milwaukee

Ryan Farrell

Attorney

Dawn Finger

Outreach & Training

Coordinator

Lawanda Kai Gardner

Advocacy Specialist

Rice Lake

Jo Pelishek

Advocacy Specialist

Green Bay

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SSI Managed Care External

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Disability Drug Benefit Helpline: 800-926-4862 statewide

* for persons with disabilities and their family members

disabilityrightswi.org

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