Tom Masseau: Experienced P&A Advocate

His 25 years working in the field of disability rights began when Tom Masseau was a teenager. He worked at Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc., through high school and college, and joined the staff full time after graduating from Michigan State University with a degree in Public Administration. An early interest in communicating with policymakers about issues critical to people with disabilities led Masseau to concentrate on and eventually take over directing all government and media relations for the Michigan agency. He is a leader nationally on legislative issues and serves on several National Disability Rights Network committees. It was there he got to know retired Disability Rights Wisconsin Executive Director Lynn Breedlove. “I’ve known Lynn and respected his work with Disability Rights Wisconsin for many years through his reputation as a disability leader,” says Masseau. “Working on a range of issues with the many dedicated, experienced staff members here has been a great learning opportunity for me about what is possible in the agency’s efforts to protect and advocate for people with disabilities.”

NOTE: Tom Masseau resigned as Executive Director in February 2013. The Disability Rights Wisconsin Board of Directors appointed Assistant Director Joan Karan to serve as Acting Director while it proceeds with the hiring process.
Disability Rights Wisconsin saw change in 2012 as board and staff members welcomed new Executive Director Tom Masseau to the organization early in the year. It’s been a valuable time for all of us to renew a commitment to what is right and fair for people with disabilities.

As Tom traveled the state making himself familiar with existing programs, projects and partnerships, he saw the strength behind Disability Rights’ reputation for forthright, reasoned protection and advocacy. As our advocates in the Madison, Milwaukee and Rice Lake offices told him about their work and goals, they made clear their deep connection to the cause.

Seeing Disability Rights through fresh eyes brings a new perspective on adherence to mission: challenging systems and society to achieve positive changes in the lives of people with disabilities and their families. The stories in this Report to Community demonstrate how that mission guides us.

Our work in corrections is an important example. After more than a decade of advocacy for people with disabilities who are in prisons and jails, we know our presence has influenced state and local policies of incarceration. Even as resource limits shrink the ability of Disability Rights to take individual corrections cases, we remain vigilant on issues of system change.

There were important state legislative victories in 2012: bipartisan agreements to protect vulnerable children, free up important long term care benefits and remove stigmatizing language from state laws. Thanks to a collaborative effort by Disability Rights and others in the disability community, the last session also saw many more self-advocates make the case for lawmakers to act when they gave testimony at hearings and met with their representatives. A groundbreaking Listening Session was held inside a mental health institution last March, giving other consumers a voice. Board leaders and staff members heard about service and advocacy needs directly from people working toward recovery.

There is a new energy in Disability Rights’ Northwest Wisconsin office with the naming of Jodi Hanna as the new office director. Based in our Madison office for more than a decade, Jodi talks in the Report about how she and other staff members there have plans to reach out to community leaders and policymakers—places we need to be.

Taken altogether, 2012 has been a year of forging new, productive relationships at the leadership level and across the organization. A year of learning, too, that brought achievement and challenge in equal measure. It also affirmed the enduring strength of purpose board and staff members of Disability Rights Wisconsin share—with each other, and with our coalition partners and supporters throughout Wisconsin.

We seize on that strength in 2013, prepared to continue advocating for change that truly matters in people’s lives.

Jeff Timm
Board President, 2010–2012
Help on the inside

Prisons and jails are hard places to defend the rights of people with disabilities. The culture of tight security and strict rules resists accommodating individual needs of any kind. Overcoming this takes effort and persistence. Which is what Disability Rights Wisconsin understood 12 years ago when it first dedicated resources to corrections advocacy and systems change.

Work begun then positioned the organization to assist inmates who required help getting grave physical and mental health needs met and intervene on individual cases. Disability Rights legal advocates also keep an eye on corrections policies in general that fail to protect the rights of people with disabilities behind bars. Watchful critics of the system, they are accepted as a knowledgeable resource by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) and facility administrators.

Presence felt
Disability Rights was one of the first federally mandated protection and advocacy organizations in the country to take its advocacy work inside prisons and jails, and the only disability organization in the state that pressed for access to inmates held in mental health and segregated units, including juvenile facilities.

“One of our greatest concerns is the lack of attention to mental health issues, which is staggering given that correctional settings are the largest mental health institutions in the state,” says Disability Rights Managing Attorney Kit Kerschensteiner.

Kerschensteiner, who leads Disability Rights’ work in corrections, adds that the agency knew it had to argue for systems change from first-hand knowledge. “We made being there, in the setting, a top priority because that’s the only way we could do effective individual advocacy and make our presence felt.”

It was felt on a range of cases in 2012 that tested the system’s response to dealing with inmates’ disability issues and helped individuals gain access to psychiatric or medical care or reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). Disability Rights Staff Attorney Michele Hughes handled the cases with assistance from law school interns Erika Padgett and Chelsee Martinez.

Hughes says the legal advocates see their role as problem solvers rather than adversaries when they go into a facility to meet with clients and resolve a complaint. As a result, Disability Rights has a good relationship with DOC administrators and many wardens who are willing to collaborate on solutions.

Accommodation on release
The history of Disability Rights success with individual cases includes advocating for access to hearing aids and other medical supplies related to an individual’s disability, and improved health screening and treatment for incarcerated veterans with mental health issues. Eight years ago, the group’s advocacy for an inmate in a women’s prison resulted in a state law that
criminalized sexual conduct between guards and inmates.

A case from last year is another example of how advocating for the rights of one person can produce changes to the system that benefit many others. Researching the complaint from an individual with multiple sclerosis who needed a wheelchair and accessible housing on his release from prison, Hughes found a serious gap between the right to reasonable accommodation inside an institution and similar access on the outside. Individuals with disabilities could not be sure of getting the supports they needed to meet the terms of their release and risked having their parole revoked.

Disability Rights worked with the division inside the DOC that administers probation and extended supervision programs to address this shortcoming in a system that affects a significant number of people with disabilities. The Wisconsin Division of Community Corrections agreed to implement a policy that includes accommodations in release plans.

**Restore communication**

New and better assistive technology featured in another 2012 case, this one concerning the ability of an inmate who is deaf and hard of hearing to communicate with family and friends. He needed a special TTY voice relay system to talk with family members. But when the DOC shut down that free system after misuse by the general population, his only choice was paying a prohibitively high fee for limited use of a phone in the social worker’s office. Less than ideal and discriminatory, Hughes says the situation also concerned corrections administrators who were looking for answers.

Disability Rights asked Bette Mentz-Powell from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services’ Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing for ideas and she recommended Z-phone technology. The system allows deaf and hard of hearing individuals to direct-dial another party and sign or use voice-over technology with the help of a remote video interpreter. The DOC will test the system at the Oshkosh Correctional Institution and then consider wider implementation, restoring the rights of certain individuals to communicate with family.

**Shoes that fit**

Disability Rights also advocated last year for an incarcerated individual struggling to navigate a complicated prison health services system. Intervention by Hughes and Martinez led to a resolution for the inmate who had tried unsuccessfully for years to request special shoes for a diabetic foot condition. It also resulted in better training for all health unit managers.

Investigating the inmate’s complaints about the pain he suffered from diabetic neuropathy while wearing state-issued prison boots, Disability Rights uncovered a confusing multi-level process for accommodation and failure to monitor the man’s condition adequately. Hughes succeeded in having the health services develop an active treatment plan for him that includes orthotics and appropriate footwear. After Hughes discussed the case with the Bureau of Health Services, the director instituted health services training on DOC’s footwear policy.

“Our client is not the only person with this issue, there are many at high risk for severe problems caused by lack of access to the appropriate footwear,” Hughes notes. “It was time for those who provide care inside prisons and jails to become informed about the request process and make sure it works the way it should.”

**Broader focus important**

Clearly, individual cases like these let Disability Rights stand witness to the reality people with disabilities face in a corrections environment and to identify what must change at the systems level, Kerschensteiner says.

She and Hughes routinely contribute their corrections-related expertise on disability issues to discussions aimed at reforming existing policies or developing new ones. In 2012, Hughes served on a corrections committee that set new standards for access to mental health services for people held in county jails. She pressed for improved suicide protections, daily processing of health complaints and clearly defined response timeframes for persons in a mental health crisis.

Disability Rights corrections advocates also participated on a criminal justice subcommittee where Hughes advocated for veterans in the prison system. As a result, the DOC agreed to screen for PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and combat exposure, and to improve training for DOC mental health staff in these and related areas.

As members of a DOC committee on improving reentry success, the advocates helped formulate plans for providing resources to help offenders with mental illness make an effective transition to recovery and self-sufficiency in the community.
Building awareness about disability rights issues in corrections also involves educating the professionals who serve or represent individuals with disabilities who find themselves in the justice system. Hughes provides training to the DOC’s facility-based ADA coordinators and developed a CLE program last year for attorneys on the topic of working with clients who have a mental illness. The course for lawyers reviews the implications of Not Guilty by Reason of Mental Disease or Defect (formerly NGI plea), helping public defenders understand the lasting stigma of such a plea.

**Reduced presence, continued role**

Disability Rights’ presence will be less evident starting in 2013 since the state eliminated money in the budget to cover legal representation for low-income people. Without those public interest funds, Kerschensteiner says that Disability Rights must reduce its work on individual cases. However, it does not plan to abandon corrections advocacy in other areas.

The organization is stepping up individual advocacy efforts inside juvenile justice facilities to make sure young people with disabilities have access to mental health services and other supports. Kerschensteiner, active on a range of systems issues in corrections, will maintain an open dialogue with the DOC on policies that meet ADA requirements and other issues that affect people who are in the system.

**Investment in advocacy**

The commitment of Disability Rights to change how Wisconsin’s corrections system treats the rights of individuals with disabilities who are held in its prisons, jails and forensic mental health hospitals has deep roots for a good reason, concludes Kerschensteiner. The investment in corrections advocacy helps ensure that people can meet the obligations of their sentence and hope for a greater chance of success on their return to the community.

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**Treatment records protected**

Disability Rights Wisconsin argued successfully last year to protect treatment records in an open records case brought by the La Crosse Tribune newspaper. The September 2012 decision by a state appellate court came after the newspaper's attempts over three years to gain access to sealed court files containing treatment records on a former inmate of Mendota Mental Health Institute who was participating in the Wisconsin Department of Health Services conditional release program.

Tried in the 1980s for a multiple homicide, the man was found not guilty at the time by reason of mental disease or defect and committed to the state mental health facility. More than 20 years later, he was living back in the community under the terms of a conditional release agreement when the Tribune filed its request.

Disability Rights Managing Attorney Kit Kerschensteiner says the agency got involved because of its concern about challenges to the integrity of the conditional release program. “The plans necessarily contain treatment notes and other confidential details that should remain separate from other open court records,” she notes. “We argued for the confidentiality of these records first in the trial court and then the appellate court, and they agreed that the conditional release documents must remain sealed.”

The Wisconsin Supreme Court declined to hear the case so the appellate court decision applies statewide. Kerschensteiner calls it an important victory that ensures consistent enforcement of a rule that is critical to the rights of people with mental illness.
Thousands of people with disabilities in Wisconsin who receive health coverage through Medicare get help making effective use of the Medicare Part D drug benefit thanks to a special Disability Rights Wisconsin training program. A component of the organization’s informational outreach on Medicare Part D, the trainings are preparing an impressive network of professionals to advise consumers about the complicated benefit.

Disability Rights’ focus on Medicare Part D began with a Drug Benefit Helpline that gives direct assistance to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries with coverage questions. The training program emerged next as a way to translate details of Medicare Part D for the professionals who help beneficiaries analyze drug plan options and make informed decisions about which plan is right for them.

Interest grows
Staff Attorney Eva Shiffrin conducts the web-based trainings for Disability Rights. The effort began several years ago when the Medicare Part D group, which includes Shiffrin, Information and Assistance Specialist Judy Zitske and Advocacy Specialist Ginger Rogers, realized how few resources existed for professionals faced with questions from beneficiaries about how to access the program. They needed answers.

Shiffrin covers the fundamentals of Medicare Part D, explores the process of selecting plans, discusses enrollment periods and provides solutions to common problems. She says the complexity of Medicare Part D makes it hard for many beneficiaries to navigate the program’s twists and turns. So building a network of professionals who know enough to guide them is invaluable.

The professionals seem to agree. Interest has grown to where Shiffrin regularly trains more than 500 professionals each year. Disability Rights archives the webcasts for later viewing by even more professionals who assist people with disabilities. “What we started as way to reach more consumers by preparing more professionals to help them evolved into a much-requested resource,” Shiffrin notes.

The audience for the trainings includes independent living centers, community health centers, senior centers and state-funded Disability Benefits Specialists. Anyone, in short, who needs to answer questions about Medicare Part D.

Expert resource
Managing Attorney Molly Bandt, who leads the Disability Rights benefits team, notes that Shiffrin has developed a real expertise on the drug plan’s potential and pitfalls and makes the topic accessible. “She is a dynamic trainer who knows how to communicate a complex topic so everyone learns exactly what they need to know.”

Bandt also credits Shiffrin with knowing the drug plan benefit program so well, she often is the first to bring system-wide problems to the attention of the federal agency that oversees Medicare Part D. National advocates who work on drug plan issues consider Shiffrin a leading expert.

Benefits advocacy
Another result of this outreach is advocacy. As professionals working in the field learn more about working with Medicare Part D, Bandt says the better prepared they are to speak up when something goes wrong or is not working as it should.

She adds that with its focus on Medicare Part D, Disability Rights can see that with changes in the healthcare landscape nationally, navigating options like subsidized prescription drugs remains a challenge. Through Medicare Part D training and the Helpline tool, Disability Rights continues to close the gap in knowledge that can prevent people with disabilities from making good use of a valuable benefit.
Public policy debates on disability rights issues in Wisconsin included some new voices last year. Self-advocates, parents and other family members who support what is right and fair participated more than ever in efforts to lobby for passage of legislation vitally important to them and people with disabilities across the state.

This motivated group of vocal constituents testified at legislative hearings and met one-on-one with their state legislators. Working with advocates from Disability Rights Wisconsin and its coalition partners, they helped achieve legislative approval of three key bills in 2012. It was people power at work.

Confident voices

The emergence of more individuals willing to speak with confidence about issues that affect their lives is thanks in part to Partners in Policymaking, a training program co-facilitated by Disability Rights Public Policy Coordinator Lisa Pugh and funded by the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. It prepares self-advocates and others to communicate their concerns to decision makers about issues addressed in proposed bills.

Pugh, who helped launch the Partners program in 2012, says appearances at hearings by participants and the calls they made to their representatives influenced many yes votes. “These are people who can talk with conviction about the impact of a piece of legislation on their lives or the life of a family member,” Pugh explains. “When they have that conversation with their assembly person or state senator, it’s more persuasive than anything I can say.”

Victories for care and respect

In a year when bi-partisan agreement was thin on the ground in Wisconsin, disability advocates stood with other groups to win support for lifting caps on the state’s long term care program, removing harmful language from state laws and enacting tough restrictions on the use of seclusion and restraint in schools.

Pugh says getting action on the Family Care Caps bill was essential to the continued elimination of a waiting list that deprives thousands of eligible people with disabilities in Wisconsin and the elderly of long term care benefits. Disability Rights worked with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to convince legislators that lifting the caps is sustainable and cost-effective. Newly empowered individual advocates who shared their stories at hearings and in face-to-face meetings emphasized how critical Family Care is to helping people maintain a degree of independence.

Outdated and hateful terminology was the subject of an Intellectual Disabilities Language bill that received unanimous approval. It called for removing the term “mental retardation” from all Wisconsin statutes. Long overdue,
according to many, it brings the state into line with major medical organizations and health agencies across the country that recognize the need to discourage use of hurtful, destructive language.

Again, says Pugh, the self-advocates who spoke out in public policy forums about feeling belittled at school and in their communities by people directing the negative phrase at them or others convinced legislators the time was now.

**Crucial progress**
The third legislative victory brought two seriously harmful school practices into the light and resulted in one of the toughest laws of its kind in the country. Wisconsin's Seclusion and Restraint bill prohibits certain harmful practices and requires that schools restrict their use of other methods to situations where the safety of a student or another individual is at risk. The new law states that school personnel must use the least restrictive intervention and avoid actions that can cause harm or injury. Finally, schools must notify parents when a situation warrants seclusion or restraint of their child.

A diverse group of influential stakeholders in education, including the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, backed the bill along with many advocates concerned with disability and children's issues.

For Disability Rights, passage of the bill was the culmination of a targeted advocacy effort to reduce the use of seclusion and restraint in schools that dates back more than five years and involved many of the organization's attorneys and advocates. Working with various coalition partners, the organization connected with parents whose stories about the effect the practices had on their children testified to the need for change.

Tom Masseau, Executive Director for Disability Rights, calls passage of the seclusion and restraint bill a huge success and crucial progress at the state level that has national implications.

**Multi-pronged approach**
Pugh says preparing more people to articulate how public policies help or hurt them is important to the multi-pronged approach Disability Rights and its partners in the Survival Coalition of Disability Organizations rely on for educating legislators on the issues.

She notes that many self-advocates felt "heard" for the first time in the last legislative session. People with disabilities who attended a hearing or communicated directly with their representative saw that the effort to tell their story counted for something.

Having more self-advocates and parents participate in legislative advocacy efforts also contributed to bridging the partisan divide, Pugh adds, because every legislator has constituents who are touched by disability.

**More to do**
There is much more for this diverse and growing legion of advocates to do on the public policy front in 2013.

Education reform that supports employment rights is one major policy priority. Disability Rights and its partners are asking bill sponsors to make sure a proposed get-to-work grant program that prepares young people in Wisconsin to enter the workforce serves all students ready to transition from high school, including students with disabilities.

Sustainable, accessible healthcare is another major focus. With continued implementation of the Affordable Care Act, disability advocates are working to ensure people with disabilities in Wisconsin have the supports they need. In both cases, Pugh expects the discussions to include individual advocates telling their stories.

**Hard work pays off**
Rights of people with disabilities stayed visible in the legislative clamor that characterized Wisconsin last year thanks to the hard work of many people: advocates for Disability Rights, the Survival Coalition, other organizations concerned with disability issues and many first-time individual activists for the cause. Together, they communicated effectively to elected officials how their actions can support fairness and equality for people with disabilities.

It paid off, Pugh notes, in laws that will make a difference.
When you enter an institution and experience the isolation, the disruption of lives, it underscores how much people need to connect with resources that genuinely help them recover and return to the community.

Describing her impressions of the atmosphere inside the Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex (MHC), where she helped lead a Listening Session last year, Disability Rights Wisconsin Board Member Sandra Ahrens says it affirmed for her and for others on the Board’s Advisory Council on Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) the value of talking with consumers where they are.

The March 2012 program was the first ever held in a treatment setting by Disability Rights. Advisory Council members Magda Kmiecik, Cathy Kunze, Christopher Sigl and Christine Magray joined Ahrens at MHC. Disability Rights Advocacy Specialist Liz Ford helped organize the program and the council/staff member teams that included Managing Attorney Kit Kershensteiner, Milwaukee Office Director Barbara Beckert and Executive Director Tom Masseau.

Where need is greatest
The tradition of conducting community-based Listening Sessions, as the Board does with consumers across the state several times a year, helps identify where need is greatest and how to meet it. The PAIMI Advisory Council took up the idea as a way to hear firsthand about the needs of people receiving inpatient mental health services.

Because MHC provides acute care for an average stay of five days for most individuals who come there, Ford says sessions in some of the units evolved from a group dialogue into one-on-one discussions. Less familiar with their surroundings, some people were more comfortable sharing comments on their own with the visitors from Disability Rights.

Observations
Ford regularly provides advocacy to individual residents at MHC who contact Disability Rights about problems they encounter there. The PAIMI Listening Sessions have the potential to reinforce what Ford hears and identify patterns that call for change at the systems level. Ford and Ahrens hope the presence of PAIMI members—knowledgeable, concerned outsiders—talking to people inside a facility will influence how MHC responds.

A report on the 2012 Listening Session spotlights areas where MHC fails to meet adequate standards of care and service, including respectful and positive interactions with residents by staff members. The PAIMI group also found residents had little access to recovery-related activities and few opportunities for visits from family. Information about the discharge process was poor, as was information on available community supports for recovery and other essential resources.

More listening
The MHC Listening Session was a worthy start that will guide future sessions by the PAIMI Council. The group plans to visit mental health institutions in other areas of the state in 2013, including long-term treatment facilities.

“As consumers and family members ourselves, PAIMI members are invested in gathering good information to share with the Board and staff,” says Ahrens. “This experience gave us a stronger sense of mission and an urgency to communicate about the continued need for profound change.”
Preparing people to advocate for themselves is a top priority for Disability Rights Wisconsin and an ongoing collaboration with People First Milwaukee epitomizes the commitment. Hope Lloyd, a Family Care and IRIS Ombudsman with Disability Rights who serves as the organization’s advisor to the self-advocacy group, says several achievements by the partnership in 2012 strengthened her belief in what can happen when determination and the right resources come together.

Speaking up
As with other People First groups in Wisconsin, people with disabilities lead People First Milwaukee. They combine forces as members to speak up about societal and policy issues that affect the ability of people with disabilities to achieve full and active lives.

The Milwaukee group’s efforts gained momentum last year with a grant from the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. People First Milwaukee used the funds to launch an awareness campaign that helped increase membership. Lloyd worked with group leaders to create a slide show promoting the People First idea and prepared them to use the presentation tool in different forums. They also produced brochures about the group and T-shirts featuring a new logo.

Between the polished campaign materials and a greater confidence speaking in public, Lloyd says People First Milwaukee members made their voices heard last year as invited speakers, Listening Session participants and in meetings with local government officials.

Member recruitment remains a strong focus for the group in 2013 along with continuing to raise their visibility and credibility through such appearances.

Change now
Several members also took the Partners in Policymaking training co-sponsored by Disability Rights, which prepared them to discuss legislative policy concerns with key decision makers. They joined with a growing number of self-advocates who lobbied elected state representatives in 2012 for support of laws important to people with disabilities.

A major focus was the Intellectual Disabilities Language bill that passed in the last session. People First Milwaukee members were prominent among self-advocates who testified in favor of substituting respectful language for dated and demeaning terminology in state laws and policies. Members also attended the bill signing ceremony with Governor Scott Walker that took place in Milwaukee.

Personal growth
Lloyd explains her role as connecting the group’s leaders to a range of important resources. She helps them recruit speakers for member meetings and book community appearances. And she stands in admiration of individual progress. “It is gratifying to see personal growth for many of the self-advocates,” she says. “There is tremendous value to them, of course, but I can see the positive impact they have as role models on the community at large.”

Disability Rights also gains, Lloyd notes, because the essential work on systems’ change depends on decision makers hearing from people directly affected by the system. The relationship with People First Milwaukee unites Disability Rights with people prepared to describe their experiences and advocate for change.
Major news last year in the Northwestern Wisconsin office of Disability Rights Wisconsin was the hiring of Disability Rights Attorney Jodi Hanna as Office Director/Attorney. A member of the Disability Rights staff for 13 years, Hanna relocated to the Rice Lake office in October from her previous base in the Madison office.

The assignment takes Hanna into familiar territory. The protection and advocacy work she has done with Disability Rights over the years on cases related to school issues, housing discrimination, integrated employment and access to transportation brought her to the region frequently. Hanna also remains active on the Disability Rights team that helped create the Chequamegon Bay Area Collaboration to address violence against women with disabilities.

Easy choice
Disability Rights Executive Director Tom Masseau selected Hanna for the position and says it was an easy decision. “Jodi is well respected by many disability organizations, tribes and other entities in the region. Her experience and abilities give people with disabilities there a strong, outgoing advocate.”

For Hanna, it is an opportunity to live in an area she loves and build on connections made over many years. “Plus, I’ve worked with the employees in the Rice Lake office ever since we established a presence here so I know of their dedication and expertise concerning issues people with disabilities face in this part of the state,” she says. “I want to do more outreach so the people we serve, elected officials here and in Madison, and other disability groups across the area come to know and rely on Disability Rights as a resource and partner.”

Advocacy focus
Hanna joined a skilled group of advocates in Rice Lake when she took over director duties. They include Advocacy Specialists Karen Lane and Jo Pelishek, Staff Attorney Abigail Mayer, Administrative Specialist/Family Care and IRIS Ombudsman April Kieler, and Family Care and IRIS Ombudsman Jennifer Borgh.

Her goal and theirs of coalition building region wide combines with an advocacy focus Hanna says touches on key issues affecting the independence and health of people with disabilities across the region. The right to integrated, competitive, community employment is one. “Employment is the preferred outcome for people with disabilities of working age but integrated job options and supports are scarce here,” she notes. “We want to change that.”

Dependable, accessible transportation is a similar challenge. Is is hard to find in an area with few public bus lines but necessary so people can get to appointments, jobs and community programs that reduce their isolation. Hanna says that opportunities for people with disabilities blossom when communities have reliable transportation.

Adequate access to long-term care through the Family Care program is an important focus as the loss of providers makes it hard for Family Care members to receive services. Disability Rights is working with the state to ensure any changes have the least impact on members.

At its best
The idea of protection and advocacy for people with disabilities is at its best, Hanna says, when it gives people the means to become self-sufficient and self-determining. In the Rice Lake office, “that basic concept drives us to strengthen existing collaborations that serve the needs of people with disabilities and raise the visibility of Disability Rights with others who share our commitment to improving life for all area residents.”
Whether advocating for one person or many, the professionals of Disability Rights Wisconsin bring an intensity and intelligence to their work that their colleagues in the community respect and esteem. Congratulations all.

Champion in Women’s Health

When they named her one of their 2012 Champions in Women’s Health last May, the Wisconsin Women’s Health Foundation applauded Disability Rights Wisconsin Milwaukee Office Director Barbara Beckert’s exemplary work on disability and mental health issues. The Foundation provides resources to help women in Wisconsin and families reach their health potential. The award praised Beckert as a leader in promoting quality of life for women and their families. It recognized her active dedication to raising awareness of women’s health issues and advocating for better care.

Sally Sunde Family Advocate Award

Kim Hogan has one of the most consistently demanding jobs at Disability Rights Wisconsin, says Assistant Director Joan Karan, who nominated Intake Specialist Hogan for the Community Shares of Wisconsin 2012 Sally Sunde Family Advocate Award. Hogan is the first person many consumers talk to when they call Disability Rights. Her response creates the all-important first impression for people with disabilities or family members seeking advocacy help. In nominating her colleague for the award, Karan wrote that Hogan’s compassionate approach contributes a great deal to Disability Rights’ reputation as a caring, responsive agency. The fact Hogan stays current on disability issues and programs ensures that callers receive referrals to a Disability Rights advocate or other resource from a knowledgeable front-line advocate.

Up and Coming Lawyer

A great ambassador for Disability Rights Wisconsin and an energetic advocate for the people Disability Rights serves. So his colleagues in the Milwaukee office described Staff Attorney Ryan Farrell when they nominated him as Up and Coming Lawyer last year. Farrell was honored by the Wisconsin Law Journal as one of 25 outstanding attorneys with eight years or less of experience at a special event and in a Law Journal profile. Supervising Attorney Lisa Foley and Staff Attorney Alan Freed submitted his name as a way to recognize how quickly after joining Disability Rights Farrell developed the skills and insights needed to handle complicated disability cases. He provides legal assistance and training to Disability Benefit Specialists serving consumers in Milwaukee County and, Foley says, takes every opportunity to educate people in the wider community about the importance of giving everyone a chance.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Pro-Bono Award

The opportunities to applaud publicly the contributions of a dedicated volunteer came in 2011 when the Dane County Bar Association honored Volunteer Attorney Edith Trubek Sullivan with its Pro Bono Award on the earnest recommendation of Molly Bandt, Managing Attorney with Disability Rights Wisconsin. Originally from Westchester County, New York, where she began volunteering her services after retiring in 2006, Sullivan offered her help to Disability Rights soon after relocating to Madison in 2010. She works on benefits issues for the agency and cases related to Supplemental Security Income. Bandt describes Sullivan as exceptional at uncovering key facts in medical records, writing briefs and providing the benefits team with valuable legal insights. Sullivan’s contributions make it possible for Disability Rights to serve clients who otherwise would lack representation.
Statement of Revenue and Expenses for FY12 and FY11

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<tr>
<td><strong>Expense Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4,852,755</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,066,172</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Net Income (loss)  

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Income (loss)</td>
<td>$19,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>44,687</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statement of Financial Position for FY12 and FY11

Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY12</th>
<th>FY11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Assets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash &amp; cash equivalents</td>
<td>$309,702</td>
<td>$492,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts receivable</td>
<td>40,468</td>
<td>34,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants receivable</td>
<td>325,500</td>
<td>319,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid expenses</td>
<td>129,825</td>
<td>312,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total current assets</strong></td>
<td>805,495</td>
<td>1,159,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property and equipment, net</td>
<td>210,374</td>
<td>254,597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,015,869</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,414,275</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Liabilities and Net Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY12</th>
<th>FY11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
<td>61,699</td>
<td>91,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accrued payroll</td>
<td>56,436</td>
<td>53,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amortized rent</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>3,421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital lease payable</td>
<td>3,422</td>
<td>5,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leasehold improvement payable</td>
<td>26,269</td>
<td>26,269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accrued vacation</td>
<td>118,237</td>
<td>126,729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant funds received in advance</td>
<td>45,661</td>
<td>59,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred revenue</td>
<td>209,301</td>
<td>542,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total current liabilities</strong></td>
<td>521,595</td>
<td>909,029</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                      |            |            |
| Long-term liabilities|            |            |
| Amortized rent       |            | 570        |
| Capital lease payable |            | 3,422      |
| Leasehold improvement payable | 74,384  | 100,653    |
| **Total long-term liabilities** | 74,384 | 104,645    |
| **Total liabilities** | **595,979** | **1,013,674** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY12</th>
<th>FY11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted net assets</td>
<td>419,890</td>
<td>400,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Liabilities and net assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,015,869</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,414,275</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Total Individuals Served Statewide in 2012

One-to-one Advocacy – 8259 (see map*)
Medicare Part D I&R calls – 797
Training/Consultation – 6747

*The map does not include Medicare Part D and Benefits Attorney I&Rs because client county statistics are unavailable for those contacts.

Foundation/Corporation Partners

Alliant Energy Foundation
Equal Justice Fund
Otto Bremer Foundation
Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation
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Managing Attorney
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IT Systems Administrator
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Teresa Thomas
Family Care & IRIS Ombudsman
Judy Zitske
Medicare Part D Info & Assistance Specialist

Milwaukee

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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 Project Coordinator
Sue Endress
Advocacy Specialist
Ryan Farrell
Staff Attorney
Sally Flaschberger
Advocacy Specialist
Lisa Foley
Supervising Attorney
Elizabeth Ford
Advocacy Specialist
Alan Freed
Staff Attorney
Christine Gabron
Supervising Attorney
Penelope Gall
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Family Care & IRIS Ombudsman
Hope Lloyd
Family Care & IRIS Ombudsman
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Family Care & IRIS Ombudsman
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Managing Attorney
Sarah Pitsoulakis
Staff Attorney
Ginger Rogers
Advocacy Specialist
Trishla Shah
Intake Specialist
Cathy Stieffke
Advocacy Specialist

Rice Lake

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Family Care & IRIS Ombudsman
Jodi Hanna
NW Wisconsin Office Director
Eugenia Hedlund
NW Wisconsin Office Director
April Kieler
Administrative Specialist/
Family Care & IRIS Ombudsman
Karen Lane
Advocacy Specialist
Abigail Mayer
Staff Attorney
Jo Pelishek
Advocacy Specialist

Green Bay

Jeanine Livermore
SSI Managed Care Advocate

Students/Volunteers 2012

Erin Barke
Blake Barnes
Kimberly Brown
Susan Buchko
Ed Erwin
Corey Falasz
Robert Huffar
Gregory Hwa
Rachel Konikoff
Lucia Lorenz
Ann Luetzow
Julia Mandeville
Chelsea Martinez
Chelsea Mezera
Sara Olson
Erika Padgett
Sara Sharpe
Kyle Silver
Edith Trubek Sullivan
Erin Vermillion
Branden Winningham
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