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For Immediate Release

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Disability Rights Wisconsin announces There's No Place Like Home Awardees

Disability Rights Wisconsin is celebrating forty years of advocacy as the statewide Protection and Advocacy system for Wisconsinites with disabilities. In honor of that milestone, Disability Rights Wisconsin will present four “There’s No Place Like Home Awards” the evening of Saturday, October 14th at our Ruby Anniversary gala at the Monona Terrace in Madison. Corresponding to the theme for the evening, the “There’s No Place Like Home” awards – Courage, Heart, Wisdom, and Home – recognize that Disability Rights Wisconsin works in partnership with many other heroes to advance the disability rights movement.

Today, we are pleased to announce the winners of our Ruby Anniversary “There’s No Place Like Home” awards. A call for nominations in the spring resulted in more than a hundred nominations from across the State. “We congratulate all of our award winners, who exemplify the values Disability Rights Wisconsin strives to advance in its daily advocacy efforts – inclusion, dignity, diversity, and liberation,” stated Executive Director Daniel Idzikowski.

“Since our founding as the “Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy” we have worked in coalition with other individuals, families, and groups to advance the interests of Wisconsinites with disabilities. That collaborative approach continues today. There were many excellent nominations and we wish to thank everyone who participated in this process for their dedicated work in the disability community,” Idzikowski emphasized.

The following award winners will be recognized at the Ruby Anniversary gala:

Courage: exemplifies Disability Rights Wisconsin’s value of Liberation – challenging attitudes, barriers, and discrimination, and opening new pathways to freedom. The Courage Award honors a person or group who, from lived experience, gives extraordinary voice to people with disabilities’ fight for justice to break down the walls of exclusion.

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Jason and Julie Endres (Eau Claire) could write the handbook on courage: This couple knows how to open new pathways to freedom, and how to change attitudes about people with disabilities. They are known throughout Wisconsin as leaders inside and out of the disability advocacy community. They are a wonderful team, and both teach through example and experience, selflessly giving their time and talent to help improve the lives of others.

Making their home in Eau Claire, Jason and Julie drive endless miles throughout Wisconsin to advocate on behalf of people with disabilities. They take every opportunity to connect with others and share their own lived experience. These connections, whether for children or adults can alter the trajectory of their life.

Together, Jason and Julie have supported people to develop their own businesses, participate in their community in new ways, live independently, create change to systems, participate in advocacy, and think beyond what others have told them is possible. For them, it's never been a question as to whether they will stand up for people with disabilities, but rather where and when they will advocate for others with disabilities next?

Heart: exemplifies Disability Rights Wisconsin's value of Diversity – improving the lives of people with every kind of disability and background throughout Wisconsin. The Heart Award honors a person or firm who has made an extraordinary contribution to advancing the quality of life of people with disabilities throughout Wisconsin with kindness, sensitivity, cultural competence, and awareness of past trauma.

We had some amazing nominations but in the Heart Category there were two exceptional nominees. Their work and their compassion for others were so impressive it was impossible to choose between the two so we decided to recognize two winners in this category.

To know **Delores Sallis** (Milwaukee) is a privilege and a gift. She is someone who fully lives life with a sense of community, compassion, empathy and mentorship. She is not only the matriarch of her family, but has opened her heart to hundreds of other families, individuals and neighbors within and outside the disability community. Delores has made it her mission to support this community in every way she can, which is why she founded "Parent University" in Milwaukee.

In a short time, she has created a valuable local community resource that inspires, supports and lifts up more than 300 African American families who have children with disabilities living in Milwaukee. Parent University provides supports

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so that families can stay together and gain access to the resources they need in their home community, as well as learn how to become leaders and advocates.

Parent University was not Delores's first contribution to improving the quality of life for people with disabilities in Wisconsin. She has driven miles out of her way and has spent countless hours to make sure that families have housing, that system leaders hear what changes are needed, that schools understand what families need, and that medical professionals understand what community supports can provide.

Brenda Wesley (Milwaukee) serves as Director of Education and Outreach for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Greater Milwaukee. She has been a champion in addressing the mental health needs in the African American community by working to educate the community and policy makers, and helping increase access to care, including establishment of the African American Outreach Program; ASK (Access, Support & Knowledge). Brenda is the author and director of *Pieces: In My Own Voice*, a theatrical production which shares the stories of those who live with a mental illness.

Pieces has been performed all over Wisconsin, including in many schools. Brenda has also played a lead role in training law enforcement and other first responders on how to respond to a mental health crisis as a trainer for CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) training. Brenda has become active on policy issues and serves on the Milwaukee County Mental Health Board where she has been a strong voice for increasing access to culturally competent mental health services. Her understanding of mental illness is based on her lived experience as the mother of a son diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Wisdom: exemplifies Disability Rights Wisconsin's value of Dignity – advocating so people with disabilities can exercise and enjoy their civil rights, free of abuse or neglect. The Wisdom Award honors a person or firm who has made an extraordinary contribution to advancing the civil rights of people with disabilities by changing hearts and minds through community engagement, litigation, or public policy advocacy.

Save IRIS (Wisconsin). In 2015, Wisconsin's state budget proposed that the state's self-directed long-term care program, IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-Direct), would become part of a fully-integrated managed long-term care program, leaving thousands of frail elderly and persons with physical and developmental disabilities without a stand-alone self-directed care option. Almost instantly, a group of self-direction advocates and allies, including IRIS participants, families, guardians, and caregivers came together. "Save IRIS" immediately engaged multiple

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stakeholders and influencers – legislators, the long-term care community, the media, providers and concerned citizens – to ensure that the choice and control available through IRIS would not be lost. IRIS uniquely offers individuals full budget and employer authority for home and community-based waiver services.

All of the group's leaders are graduates of Wisconsin's "Partners in Policymaking", an advocacy and systems change training program, so despite lack of prior experience leading a major public policy initiative their passion and resourcefulness resulted in a fast and effective communications strategy. Among them: a website, information pieces, talking points, fact sheets, a strong social media presence, broadcast interviews, newspaper articles, letters to legislators and newspaper editors, advocacy during listening sessions, and other forms of outreach. Ultimately, the proposal to redesign Wisconsin's long-term care system and eliminate IRIS as a stand-alone program was withdrawn. IRIS continues to serve more than 14,000 Wisconsinites.

Today, "Save IRIS" remains in full force. The unfunded, all-volunteer group meets regularly with officials at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to influence policy and make recommendations for continuous program improvement; Save IRIS members have met with legislators about proposed changes to Medicaid; continues to provide advocates and the public with information that might otherwise go unnoticed; and conducts workshops on self-direction.

Co-chairs **Nancy Gapinski** (Glendale), **Marion Holmberg** (Waukesha), and **Julie Burish** (Brookfield) will accept the award on behalf of all those involved with "Save IRIS".

Home: exemplifies Disability Rights Wisconsin's value of Inclusion – people living, working, learning and recreating together without barrier or discrimination. The Home Award honors a person or firm who has made an extraordinary contribution to the independent living movement, providing the impetus for people with disabilities to live in their own homes and interact freely with their community.

Movin' Out. Since its founding in 1992 by a group of parents, Movin' Out has assisted more than 2,000 Wisconsin households with a family member who has a disability to either purchase a home or move into an affordable apartment. Rather than relying on group homes or other impersonal facilities, they wanted their young adult children with disabilities to move into their own homes, preferably homes the young men and women could own. Finding no organization prepared to assist them, these parents decided to achieve their goal on their own.

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Over the years, Movin' Out has compiled an impressive record of success in helping people with disabilities, and their families, find and maintain housing of their choice in communities throughout Wisconsin.

Movin' Out has applied this pioneering vision of inclusive housing by creating more than 1,000 units of affordable, desirable, and well-managed rental housing in a dozen Wisconsin communities. For example, the Elven Sted development in Stoughton was built with 32 affordable units as well as market rate units; about 25% of these units are occupied by households that include a renter with disabilities with universal accessibility features. Common areas inside and on the grounds of the Yahara riverfront make this a beautiful, easy, and natural setting for connecting with neighbors and forging friendships. It is an integrated, inclusive rental community with appeal to people seeking workforce housing as well as people who rely on supportive services.

Executive Director **Timothy Radelet** (Madison) and Director of Housing Development **David Porterfield** (Madison) will accept this award on behalf of founding Executive Director Emeritus **Howard Mandeville** and the entire **Movin' Out** team.

More information and tickets to Disability Rights Wisconsin's Ruby Anniversary gala on Saturday, October 14, 2017 are available online at: www.drwi.org/ruby.

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