Off to a Good Start, On to a Better Life...
June, 2017

Off to a Good Start! This theme resonated throughout our work this past year – ensuring that all Wisconsinites with disabilities receive the services and supports they need to get off to a good start each day. Disability Rights Wisconsin accompanies people with disabilities and stands by them when barriers – attitudinal, institutional, or physical—get in the way of their full participation in the life of the community.

Through our advocacy this past year, Disability Rights Wisconsin staff members worked collaboratively to:

• promote the enactment of a new law ensuring that children with disabilities enjoy equal protection in the child welfare system;
• preserve IRIS, the self-directed long-term support system for adults with disabilities;
• win desperately needed services, such as physical therapy, for children with disabilities who were previously denied access;
• educate students with disabilities about their right to have a well thought out plan for transition that includes job experience;
• secure the right of children with disabilities to be free from seclusion and restraint in school; and
• access supports for survivors with disabilities, so they can begin to heal from the trauma of violence and assault.

This work—systemic and individual advocacy – is critical to ensure that Wisconsinites with disabilities and their families can exercise and enjoy the full extent of their rights. Every day, we resolve disputes and secure access to supports, services, employment, housing, health care, and accommodations, so that Wisconsinites with disabilities can get off to a good start in life.

Thank you for being a partner with us in these advocacy efforts. We need your support more than ever as federal funding continues to decline. Together, we have made great progress in Wisconsin toward providing an inclusive environment that benefits us all. We are off to a good start!

Daniel Idzikowski
Executive Director

Sue Gramling
President

P.S. We look forward to celebrating our 40th anniversary gala with you on Saturday, October 14th at the beautiful Monona Terrace in Madison!
Advocating to protect the rights of people with disabilities and ensure they get the services & supports they need to thrive and succeed.

Since our founding in 1977, Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) has been proud to serve people with disabilities through individual advocacy and system change. This past year, however, we’ve been involved in a concerted way to address the rights of individuals with disabilities—particularly children—to ensure that they have the opportunities for a good start in life.

**HOW DID WE WORK TO ACCOMPLISH THIS IN 2016?**

**We did it by assuring school districts provide a quality education** that addresses student’s needs. Our Special Education Advocates negotiate with school districts to ensure student’s rights to the full special education services to which they are entitled.

**We did it by securing access to services and supports** that kids need to communicate, grow, and develop. Our team of attorneys and advocates won a series of cases getting kids the therapies, mobility devices, and communication aids their parents requested.

**We did it by holding schools and facilities accountable** for implementing positive practices and limiting the use of seclusion and restraint as required under Wisconsin law. In concert with partner agencies and parents, DRW released the new report “Miles to Go” and held a press conference at the state Capitol to highlight the pervasive use of seclusion and restraint on children with disabilities in our schools.

**We did it by ensuring safe and nurturing environments** that protect children with disabilities from abuse and neglect. Our public policy team convinced the state legislature to pass a law providing children with disabilities equal access to child protective services.

**We did it with your help.** We’re proud of the changes to law and policy that we are driving to secure rights, prevent abuse and neglect, and enhance the culture of mutual respect, inclusion, and quality of life for people with disabilities. The children, parents, and adults we work with every day drive us forward. They share their stories, shine a light on unsafe practices, call out discrimination, and work to create change for a world that’s safer, equitable, and more inclusive.

Here are just a few of their stories. *
“We were very pleased with Sarah’s professional and friendly attitude. She was very helpful in seeing the need we presented/our point of view, as well as knowing the law and whether we could do anything legally or not. She wrote very well-written letters to the appropriate individuals to orchestrate a change. Sarah was very good at keeping us on track despite the emotional ups and downs we experienced at the dis-service our public school was getting away with.”
— Jolene, Lilly and Josie’s mother

Lilly

Adopted at the age of 7, Lilly is now 17 years old. Like her adopted sister, Josie, Lilly is deaf, and did not have much exposure to American Sign Language (ASL) in her early years. As such, her education lagged by several grade levels. For six years immediately following her adoption, Lilly received extensive instruction from a teacher specializing in services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) through Wisconsin’s Cooperative Educational Service Agency number 3. But in 2016, her DHH services were significantly reduced by the school’s Director of Special Education, from 72 minutes per day to one combined hour of instruction with Josie per week. The girls’ mother was not invited to the IEP meeting at which this decision was made, though the family strongly objected to the reduction in hours.

DRW advocacy specialist Sarah Chodorow worked with the parents to address their concerns, attending several IEP meetings and collaboratively writing a letter of complaint with the girls’ mother to the Department of Public Instruction, resulting in an award of compensatory education. Chodorow negotiated the terms of this compensatory education and referred the family to additional programs—including the Wisconsin Educational Service Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Outreach (WESP-DHH Outreach).

Lilly’s services were eventually restored to 90 minutes of instruction per day, and WESP-DHH Outreach has provided the school with extensive recommendations and consultation for how best to educate Lily.

MEDIA MENTION

“Feds urge support for disabled students”
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, August 10, 2016

“Johnson Amendment would limit ADA Enforcement in Voucher Schools.”
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, July 01, 2016
At around five months of age, Carson’s parents realized their son had some developmental disabilities. After seeing a variety of specialists, Carson was diagnosed with neuronal migration disorder, a birth defect that affects the brain and neurons, resulting in severe global development delays. Despite such delays, Carson exudes love and joy, and has made amazing progress over the last seven years thanks to weekly speech, occupational, and physical therapy sessions. But it’s been a nearly constant battle with Wisconsin’s Department of Health Services (DHS) Medicaid prior authorization system and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to get these services for Carson. The family has appealed nine denials and/or “modifications” (which were essentially denials) to their son’s prior authorization requests, a process that has required providing thousands of documents over the years. In addition to the denials, nearly every prior authorization request was scrutinized as if Carson’s therapy was no longer needed.

DRW supervising attorney Mitch Hagopian worked with the family to prepare their appeals and evidence for hearings with the judge, but it wasn’t until their ninth appeal that the family asked Hagopian to represent them. With this ninth appeal, the OIG brought into question all of Carson’s previously approved therapies, and even brought in their own team of DHS therapists (who had never met their son) to testify against these therapies. Hagopian worked closely with the family and helped Carson’s therapist create a detailed rebuttal to the DHS therapists who had testified against him at trial. After responding to massive amounts of paperwork and numerous arguments by the OIG, the ninth denial was eventually overturned. Today, Carson receives all the therapies he needs to make improvements to his skill and strength—and his family remains committed to ensuring he gets the continual therapies he needs.

“We are extremely grateful to Mitch Hagopian and the Disability Rights Wisconsin team. Mr. Hagopian has enlightened and educated us so much about the appeals process. Together, we have a continued passion for advocacy for all special needs children and young adults. It is truly unfortunate how DHS views coverage for therapies and continual services as, in most cases, this is the only chance a child may have to improve and gain skills. We will continue to advocate for not only our son’s therapies but for those who follow on the path behind us. Being a special needs parent already comes with its own set of challenges—and getting the services to truly make a difference in your child’s life shouldn’t have to be one of them. We will continue to fight the good fight!”

—Pamela & Jeff, Carson’s parents
Trystan

Trystan was in incredible pain. At 20 years old, he had outgrown his wheelchair and this was not only uncomfortable, but the odd position the chair forced him into caused his bone to move out of its hip socket. He found only momentary relief from the pain when he was standing. Because he has cerebral palsy, his muscles would not allow him to get himself into a standing position. To achieve that, two people had to lift him into a strapped-in contraption, a process that took about 20 minutes, with a result that was often less than comfortable. Because workers were only available twice per day, Trystan was required to remain standing for hours. He had little control over his life, his movements, or his ability to alleviate his pain on his own. It was becoming increasingly difficult to control bed sores, and doctors had concerns about permanent damage to his hip. To help with these issues, Trystan requested a sit-to-stand wheelchair from Family Care. The request was denied, so Trystan’s family contacted DRW and asked for help.

Jean Jarosh, a Family Care and IRIS Ombudsman at DRW, helped the family appeal the denial. Jean worked closely with the family and the Family Care team to attempt to informally resolve the issue. Ultimately, DRW was at Trystan’s side when a formal appeal in an administrative hearing was conducted. Program Attorney Melanie Cairns organized and presented the evidence, and Trystan provided testimony. The administrative law judge ruled in favor of Trystan’s request, and a custom sit-to-stand wheelchair was quickly ordered. The difference it has made to Trystan has been remarkable. He is now able to shift his body position as needed, and his level of pain has decreased significantly. There have been unexpected benefits, too. Because he can now talk with people at eye level, Trystan’s self-confidence has skyrocketed. Since he no longer must wait for workers to strap him into a standing device, he has much more freedom to move around. He loves talking with people; in fact, he is now booking speaking engagements on overcoming obstacles. *

“Disability Rights Wisconsin was wonderful to work with and so helpful to our family in securing this wheelchair for Trystan. They took care of all the paperwork and set up our appointments with the judge. They just took everything off our plate, which was a huge relief! I now recommend Disability Rights Wisconsin to everyone I know who might be facing similar challenges. They were just superb to work with.”
—Wendy, Trystan’s grandmother
Mary

By the time Mary requested the implantation of a neurostimulation device to treat her excruciating occipital and trigeminal nerve pain, she had tried every possible treatment and medication—including opioids—to effectively address these debilitating conditions. Nothing had provided much relief, and the medications resulted in terrible side effects. Nearly incapacitated, Mary was forced to quit both her job and work on her Master’s degree, and effectively parenting her son was extremely difficult. The neurotransmitter device that was recommended by her pain clinic was her last chance at relief, but her Medicaid HMO refused to pay for this treatment, arguing the device was not an effective treatment for her condition.

DRW supervising attorney Mitch Hagopian worked with Mary before, during, and after a hearing to get Medicaid to cover the cost of the device, citing studies and articles that showed the implant was an effective treatment for her condition. With Hagopian’s help, Mary won her hearing. However, as she was preparing to switch from her temporary neurostimulation device to a permanent one, her provider was reluctant to request the permanent implant because of the low Medicaid reimbursement rate. Hagopian intervened to convince the provider that it had an obligation to complete the treatment regimen it had started. But once submitted, the Medicaid HMO sent a denial letter indicating they would not cover the permanent device. Within an hour, Hagopian sent an appeal letter and, within hours of doing so, the HMO withdrew their denial. Since the implantation of Mary’s permanent neurostimulation device, her pain has been reduced almost entirely and she has gone off all medications for these conditions, including opioids. She’s finished her Master’s degree and now advocates for the use of the implant as a pain control device to help others.

Johnny

At just 20 years old, “Johnny” has witnessed more violence and tragedy than most will ever know in a lifetime. During his upbringing in an impoverished Wisconsin neighborhood, Johnny was traumatized by the numerous acts of gun violence he witnessed, and consistently worried about his own personal safety. He developed symptoms of PTSD in adolescence, unable to work after graduating from high school due to his persistent and severe mental illness.

In jeopardy of losing his Social Security Income benefits, and with no attorney willing to take his case, Johnny was referred by a Disability Benefit Specialist to Disability Rights Wisconsin. DRW staff attorney Ryan X. Farrell learned about Johnny’s day-to-day struggles and successfully presented his case to the judge, arguing that his client’s dual diagnoses of PTSD and major depression order were disabling. Fortunately, Johnny’s testimony prevailed at hearing, and he was awarded continuing SSI and Medicaid benefits to provide for his basic income and health care needs.

“Working with Mitch Hagopian and Disability Rights Wisconsin made this difficult journey a little easier to endure. Mitch was very educated, did his research, explained the process, and the result was successful. Because this was a precedent case, I am confident that without his help the decision may not have been in my favor. While it was a long and frustrating journey for all involved, DRW and Mitch were invaluable.” -- Mary

“Those facing traumatic experiences and mental illness are often unable to secure legal assistance due to limited means. This often makes it difficult for these individuals to retain their benefits. Johnny’s story is just one example of how Disability Rights Wisconsin helps those in our society who are in greatest need.” —Ryan X. Farrell, DRW attorney
This year’s Annual Report is dedicated to the memory of Angelika (Angie) Arndt, and to the memory of countless other Wisconsin children who have been isolated, restrained, and abused—children whose only offense was having a disability. Angie’s case and others like it have inspired us to act to ensure schools and mental health facilities ensure the wellbeing of children with disabilities.

ANGIE’S STORY

May 25, 2006, started out like any other day for seven-year-old Angelika “Angie” Arndt. An active girl with sparkling brown eyes and a gentle smile; Angie loved dolls, dressing up, and country music.

Angie’s life had not been an easy one. Born in Milwaukee, Angie was given up by her biological parents as a toddler, and was in and out of foster care before she was taken into a loving home in Ladysmith in 2005. Diagnosed with reactive detachment disorder, a mood disorder, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder—these were brought on by significant neglect and abuse—Angie was nevertheless progressing in her new home, but needed some extra interventions to help prepare her for first grade. Under the advisement of a social worker, Angie’s parents placed her into a day treatment program in Rice Lake.

Two weeks of summer therapy was recommended to ready her for public school. Instead, on May 25th, for blowing bubbles in her milk and swinging her legs, staff members secluded Angie in an isolation room and, when she continued to fidget, pinned her to the ground and sat on her until, after nearly 30 minutes, she stopped breathing. Ten years have now passed since that day.

After her death, Angie’s family learned she had been restrained by center staff at least nine times prior, and that the center was negligent in reviewing her medical and psychological records. They had not consulted her prepared treatment plan or provided guidance to staff on the use of restraint.

No one was ever charged with a crime for Angie’s death. Her parents, along with dozens of others whose children had been abused, secluded, and restrained, contacted Disability Rights Wisconsin.

“People knew things were going on in facilities and schools,” says Sally Flaschberger, Lead Advocacy Specialist at DRW. “There were stories circulating of kids being restrained unsafely or secluded in locked rooms. At the time, parents could report these things, but there wasn’t really anything being done about it.”

Despite growing research that showed the use of seclusion and restraint only exacerbated challenging behaviors, Wisconsin laws in 2006 regarding these techniques were either nonexistent or outdated, and there were no statutes or regulations regarding seclusion and restraint in day treatment centers or schools.

A CALL FOR NEW LEGISLATION

In Spring 2009, after three years of investigation, and allied with Wisconsin Family Ties and Wisconsin FACETS, DRW issued the joint report Out of Darkness . . . Into the Light, which chronicled the stories of 26 children whose development had been put at risk through seclusion and restraint.

The report identified ten principles for creating or revising Wisconsin law regarding positive behavioral intervention and the use of seclusion and restraint. The allied organizations called for immediate action.

Newly crafted legislation curtailed the use of seclusion and restraint, required training on positive interventions, and mandated documentation and reporting of the use of seclusion and restraint, including parental notification.

Out of Darkness…Into the Light brought forth a call for new laws to govern the use of seclusion and restraint. Working with Wisconsin legislators, advocates at DRW helped draft legislation and championed the passage of 2011 Wisconsin Act 125 in March 2012. This law established a statutory framework to permit the use of seclusion or physical restraint only when a student’s behavior presents a clear, present, and imminent risk to the physical safety of the student or others AND seclusion or restraint is the least-restrictive intervention feasible.

Act 125 severely curtails methods of seclusion and restraint, provides for training on their appropriate and safe
use with students, and requires parents to be notified when seclusion or physical restraint are used.

Act 125 went into effect beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, but it was far from perfect. “There was a lot of confusion about the law,” explains Flaschberger. “Parents didn’t understand that they could request incident reports from their school, and families continued to report on seclusion and restraint being used on their children without notice.”

DRW and other advocacy organizations submitted open-records requests to school districts for both the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, to examine data on how and when seclusion and restraint practices were used. Particularly troubling was that children with disabilities accounted for 80% of incidents. These practices were also being used disproportionately on elementary school students.

MILES TO GO

In February of 2016, Marcia stood in the Wisconsin State Capitol along with several other parents and told the story of her son, Quinton (page 8). The details of seclusion and restraint seemed all too familiar. DRW, Wisconsin Family Ties, and Wisconsin FACETS called a press conference to highlight the continuing struggle to implement Act 125 and to call for new reforms. Working from the data gathered from school districts and parent stories, they published a second report: *Seclusion & Restraint in Wisconsin Public School Districts 2013-2014: Miles to Go.*

*Miles to Go* explains the groundbreaking strides and shortcomings of Act 125. It also features stories of students—most with disabilities—who had experienced harmful seclusion and/or restraint in schools since the passage of Act 125. The report concludes with recommendations such as requiring reporting of seclusion and restraint data to the DPI, reporting seclusion and restraint to parents/guardians, requiring debriefing sessions after incidents of seclusion or restraint, and ensuring police officers that provided services to schools followed these recommendations.

Since the passage of Act 125, DRW has advocated and intervened on behalf of many children to develop Individualized Education Plans and Positive Behavior Supports with their schools. DRW, along with a growing coalition of allies, is continuing its advocacy for new legislation.

“Act 125 was a great start,” says Flaschberger of the 2012 legislation, “but of course, once you put a law like this in place, you immediately see areas that can be improved. We’re currently working on the recommendations from *Miles to Go* to enact important legislative changes that will protect students with disabilities.”

DRW Advocacy Specialist Jo Pelishek, who works in the Rice Lake office, still thinks about seven-year-old Angie and the senseless tragedy that ended her life a decade ago. “Angie’s story continues to have a profound impact on me and many others,” Pelishek says. “The heartbreak I feel each time I pass the building where Angie was supposed to be receiving support continues to ignite my passion to advocate for safe environments for all children. Although I’m pleased that progress has been made, there is still work to do.”

*       *       *

Over the past ten years since the tragedy of Angie Arndt’s death, Disability Rights Wisconsin has fought zealously for the rights of children with disabilities. Though we have miles to go, Disability Rights Wisconsin remains committed to improving laws and practices in schools, correctional facilities, and treatment centers, so that all children can learn in a safe environment.
Quinton's Story

Quinton was diagnosed with ADHD and autism during preschool. Though he received special services to help him with his disabilities, he developed more challenging behavior in first grade. Seeking additional support for their son from the school, Quinton's parents met with his school's teachers and assistant principal to develop a behavioral intervention plan. Sadly, the plan was never implemented.

Instead, the school's special education teacher indicated that she needed to restrain Quinton to prevent his hyperactivity from disrupting other students. Quinton's parents assumed this meant that the teacher might be placing a hand on Quinton's shoulder or elbow to redirect his activity. It wasn't until his mother, Marcia, noticed red marks on her son's back that she learned that "restraint" meant that Quinton's arms were being crossed over his chest and held by two adults, who then lifted him and carried him out of the classroom. At times, he was shut in a room, the door closed held from the other side, while Quinton cried, screamed, and banged on the door.

When Marcia called the school to demand the use of such restraint be halted immediately, the school principal explained that restraint would be used when necessary by a trained staff member, in accordance with Wisconsin's Act 125. Though the principal indicated incident reports were available to Quinton's parents, they were denied access to these reports for several weeks.

Marcia began to research Act 125 and learned that the school was not following the requirements of the law. Quinton did not present a clear risk to physical safety, as the law stipulated. No IEP team meeting was called and no incident report was available within two days.

DRW staff worked with Quinton's parents at mediation with their son's school district, which agreed to put practices into place that went over and above those required in Act 125. And while the eventual outcome was a positive one, Quinton's story clearly illustrates the need for greater clarification, oversight, and reporting on the use of seclusion and restraint on Wisconsin's children.
**ACT 365: SOMETIMES PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF**

DRW’s main public policy achievement of 2016 was Wisconsin Act 365, which calls to improve the ability of Child Protective Services to identify, understand, and protect children with disabilities.

**THE INVESTIGATION**

In 2016, Disability Rights Wisconsin received a call regarding suspected child abuse in a home. Although this was not an issue usually within our priorities, this caused a cascade of events culminating in our pioneering of groundbreaking legislation, causing broad systemic change.

At first, we were admittedly slow to respond. Child abuse allegations are generally referred to county Child Protective Services (CPS) workers — particularly when the alleged abuse is in the home by a family member. Yet this child was reported to have a disability.

After another inquiry and testimony that arose in a different context, it became apparent to us that there was a systemic problem. These complaints about abuse of a child with disabilities were being dismissed, in part, because of the child’s disability. This was not an isolated case.

We acted. DRW’s advocacy and public policy teams investigated further and discovered at least 19 cases within the last three years of a child with a disability dying or being repeatedly abused after CPS workers had investigated reports of abuse.

At the same time, the Wisconsin Attorney General was seeking the authority to require all child abuse allegations be referred to law enforcement, because of numerous cases involving children with disabilities who were harmed or killed after CPS inaction.

**THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS**

This initiative provided an opening for us to address the underlying issue — the inability of CPS workers to identify that children had a disability, the inability to effectively communicate because a child or family member had a disability, and the dismissal of cases due to a lack of resources.

Model legislation was drafted and introduced at the urging of DRW’s public policy team. With testimony from the original complainant and the support of multiple advocacy groups, 2015 Act 365 was passed and signed into law on April 19, 2016. This law was the second of its kind in the nation. It required the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) to develop and implement a plan that would improve the practices used to investigate and handle reports of the abuse or neglect of children with disabilities.

**SOMETIMES PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF**

Statistical analysis of data from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the Department of Health Services (DHS), and Department of Children and Families (DCF) confirmed that more than a third of the children involved in the child welfare system had a disability; vastly higher than their representation in the general population.

Act 365 required action on WDCF’s plan by the end of the year. The DCF worked with people from state and local agencies, law enforcement, educators, and disability advocacy groups, including DRW’s Executive Director Daniel Idzikowski. Over six months this group met, listened to experts, and debated priorities for reforming the child welfare system as it affected children with disabilities.

DCF’s final report was based on the recommendations of this workgroup, and issued in December of 2016.

DRW continues to meet regularly to assist in the implementation of the report’s recommendations and hold the child welfare system accountable to the requirements and spirit of the new law. This concerted effort by advocates at Disability Rights Wisconsin promises to help children with disabilities get off to a much better start in their quest for safety, stability, and justice.

*The report can be found at: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/reports/pdf/act365.pdf*
Family Care and IRIS are the two programs that administer long-term care services to adults with disabilities and the frail elderly in most of the state's counties. These highly effective programs took many years to develop and considerable investment of time and resources. Their unique, cost-effective design—the result of several decades of collaborative effort between the Department of Health Services, constituents, providers and advocates—focused on meeting the individual needs of people who needed support to live, work, and enjoy life in the community.

In 2015, the Wisconsin legislature, responding to the Governor's biennial state budget proposal, moved to make sweeping changes to Family Care and IRIS in what became dubbed Family Care/IRIS 2.0. The concept advanced by the legislature would have fundamentally changed the spirit and nature of the programs. The proposal combined all aspects of long term care and health care under a managed care insurance-based umbrella, eliminating IRIS as an independent, fully self-directed alternative to managed care. It would also have resulted in the loss of Wisconsin-grown managed care organizations and IRIS agencies. Family Care/IRIS 2.0 would likely have been administered by national for-profit insurance companies. There was no evidence that this new model directed by the proposed legislation would be better for enrollees, and no evidence that it would save the state money. Worse, the legislation gave DHS very little time to act, requiring a concept paper be submitted to the Joint Committee on Finance by April of 2016.

DRW jumped into action. Working in coalition with other advocacy organizations, participants with disabilities and other stakeholder groups, we provided feedback and suggestions to the concept plan being developed by DHS. We also worked with individuals and families that would be affected, and with legislators to make sure they understood the many potential impacts of the new model. After 17 months of intense activity, and with concerned legislators’ diminishing support, the Department of Health Services rescinded its concept paper on Family Care/IRIS 2.0 in June of 2016. This move effectively ended the march toward this massive, unnecessary change.

Building upon legal precedent in a case argued by the Protection and Advocacy system in the New Hampshire Supreme Court, Disability Rights Wisconsin successfully advocated for a policy change in Wisconsin's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program, known as “W-2”. After the decision in New Hampshire, Wisconsin remained the only state that included children’s Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in household income for purposes of determining financial eligibility for W-2.

Children’s SSI is meant only for the support of children with disabilities – it is not intended to be generally available to the household. Thus, Wisconsin’s policy violated the intent of the federal program. At the request of Disability Rights Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, which administers the W-2 program, reviewed and changed their policy to disregard children’s SSI income when determining eligibility for W-2. The Department changed their policy guidance and reprogrammed the computer system that determined W-2 eligibility. Families with a child with a disability will no longer be disadvantaged or denied access to a public benefit for which they would otherwise be eligible.
MITCH RECEIVED THE HOWARD B. EISENBERG DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD FROM THE WISCONSIN EQUAL JUSTICE FUND IN 2016

Mitchell Hagopian is a 1981 graduate of the University of Illinois and a 1985 graduate of the UW Law School who has devoted his entire legal career to representing economically-disadvantaged and other traditionally-unrepresented people.

Mitch has worked for DRW since March 2001, advocating on behalf of people with disabilities. In that time he has trained hundreds of lay advocates and attorneys in the nuances of the public benefits programs that help the poor, elderl, and people with disabilities. In more recent years, his practice has expanded to include protective services issues.

In 2001 Mitch argued before the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of Medicaid recipient Irene Blumer in WD-HFS v. Blumer. Though he failed to win this case and remains irritated at the court’s decision to this day, he succeeded in 2002 when he argued on behalf of Judy K. before the Wisconsin Supreme Court in Judy K. v. Dunn County. This case established a county’s duty under Chapter 55 to “find and fund” appropriate community placements.

Mitch has never charged his clients a penny for his services, and he is confident that they have gotten their money’s worth. ⚖

IN MEMORY OF AMY JUDY, ESTEEMED COLLEAGUE AND ADVOCATE

Amy Judy led the Wisconsin Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women (VAWA) Project at Disability Rights Wisconsin from its inception in 2002 until 2015. Amy never worked alone and the Project was no exception- the Project worked in collaboration with several partners and countless numbers of local agencies, self-advocates, and individuals. In the spirit of that collaboration, the Project partners issue this joint statement. We are deeply saddened by the death of Amy Judy. The VAWA project’s mission was that “[w]omen with disabilities and Deaf Women who experience sexual assault and/or domestic violence will be supported by people who have actively prepared for access and who think about the meaning of respect, one woman at a time.”

Although Amy officially began work on the Disability Rights Wisconsin VAWA project in 2002, in many ways, her entire life and career led here. Amy’s work as a community organizer, her personal and professional experience with people with disabilities, experience working with sexual assault and domestic violence survivors, and her dedication to social justice all informed her approach. It was intersectional and trauma-informed long before these terms were widely used. Amy was a deeply thoughtful and contemplative leader who brought together people of different philosophies, cultures, and backgrounds and provided the firm and gentle guidance that moved people first to insight and epiphany, then to action. Time and time again, we watched as Amy gathered people in a room, listened, asked questions, gently challenged assumptions, harnessed expertise, captured creativity, and found solutions for problems that previously seemed insurmountable. Building on these conversations and the work done before her, Amy led the efforts to develop resources, conduct trainings, and provide assistance to local programs to ensure truly accessible services for victims with disabilities. Her practical solutions to historical problems gained her national recognition. Amy was a mentor to countless individuals throughout the course of this Project. She elevated the voices of advocates and individuals with lived experience as leaders in this movement. Her ground-breaking work will improve the lives of survivors with disabilities for years to come. Although Amy took her work to an even larger national stage at the Vera Institute for Justice in 2015, her dedication, deep conviction, leadership, warmth, sense of humor, and generosity will be greatly missed.

VAWA Project Partners: Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW), End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA), and Deaf Unity ⚖
**REVENUE FY16**

- State Grants/Contracts: 52% ($2,712,095)
- Federal Grant: 3% ($1,170,848)
- Federal Allocations: 36% ($1,877,362)

**PROGRAM EXPENSES FY16**

- Salaries & Wages: 59% ($3,071,967)
- Management & Administration: 11% ($560,228)
- Disability Benefits: 19% ($1,006,191)

**PROGRAM EXPENDITURES FY16**

- Ombuds: 18% ($907,445)
- Protection & Advocacy: 42% ($2,173,468)
- Management & Administration: 13% ($654,341)

**3862 INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY REGION IN 2016**

- Northern: 168
- Western: 377
- Northeastern: 485
- Southern: 755
- Southeastern: 2077

**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF 2016 FINANCIAL ACTIVITY**

- Total Revenue: $5,236,740
- Total Expenses: $5,216,086
- Unrestricted Net Assets, beginning of year: $441,378
- Unrestricted Net Assets, end of year: $462,032
- Change in Net Assets: $20,654

**DRW Funding Sources for FY16**

- State Grants/Contracts: 53% ($2,767,393)
- Federal Grants: 42% ($2,213,097)
- Fundraising: 1% ($51,765)
- Grants and Foundations: 3% ($139,249)
- Attorney Fees: 1% ($21,436)
- Consultation and Training Fees: 1% ($43,800)

**DRW Expenditures for FY16**

- Protection and Advocacy: 33% ($1,698,493)
- Family Care IRIS Ombuds: 25% ($1,325,942)
- Disability Benefits: 19% ($1,006,191)
- Management and Administration: 11% ($560,228)
- Fundraising and Lobbying: 2% ($94,113)
- VAWA: 3% ($153,567)
- SSI-MC: 5% ($269,887)
- Let's Get to Work: 1% ($51,148)
- Training and Consultation: 1% ($56,517)
NEW PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In the Fall of 2016, DRW was awarded several new grants to expand our advocacy efforts. These include:

**The Greater Milwaukee Foundation:**

**Equal Treatment: Closing the Service Gap for Children with Disabilities.** This initiative focuses on outreach and advocacy to Milwaukee African American families who have a child with a disability, and to community agencies that serve children and families. Our goal is to increase awareness and access to community-based services and supports that can assist and empower children with disabilities and their families.

DRW also received another grant to train parents in Milwaukee County on the new college and career individualized transition plans and to hold a clinic to review student current plans. Our goal would be to help parents understand the transition process and offer suggestions on how to build a better career and college-ready plan for the student.

**Otto Bremer Trust Foundation:**

**Increasing Employment Opportunities for Youth and Adults with Disabilities.**

This initiative focuses on providing youth and young adults with disabilities and their families with information and the self-advocacy tools they need to ensure that schools are supporting them as required to work toward obtaining competitive, integrated, community-based employment.

**Victims of Crime Act (VOCA):**

**Trauma Responsive Advocacy for Adults and Children with Disabilities.** This grant project will provide trauma-responsive advocacy to assist people with disabilities, who have been victims of a crime, in navigating the civil, criminal justice, and victim response systems.

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Please join us in celebrating 40 years of promoting the rights of people with disabilities on Saturday, October 14, 2017 at the Monona Terrace in Madison, WI.

For more details, check out our website at www.disabilityrightswi.org/drws-40th-anniversary-celebration-gala

Celebrating our 40th Anniversary

There’s no place like home.

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Toll Free: 800-928-8778 statewide—for persons with disabilities and their family members
SSI-Managed Care External Advocate: 800-708-3034 statewide
Disability Voting Rights Helpline: 800-928-8778 statewide
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