Long-term care is changing in Wisconsin. With the expansion of the Family Care and IRIS programs comes the end of waiting lists for much needed services. We are just beginning to learn about this new system; the opportunities it presents in lives of people with disabilities and the expectations for those who support them. In 2007, there were 5 counties in Wisconsin with Family Care. Today, Family Care and IRIS are available in 57 of Wisconsin’s 72 counties. One cannot overstate how massive this change has been.

The philosophy of Self-Determination, the fundamental human right to be in control of one’s own life, is part of the makeup of Wisconsin’s new long-term care system. Additionally, Self-Directed Support (SDS) is a distinct feature of both Family Care and IRIS. SDS means the person receiving support is in control of what his/her life looks like, how his/her services are arranged, and with whom he/she works. There are two ways that people exercise their authority in SDS - through Budget Authority and Employer Authority. Budget Authority means that the person receiving long-term care knows how much is allocated for his/her services and makes decisions about how those funds are spent. Employer Authority means the person decides who provides his/her support.

Join the Employment Network Online! By Deb Wisniewski

There’s a lot happening throughout Wisconsin to promote and support community employment for people with disabilities. People are using creative ideas to find jobs and develop careers. Communities are coming together to discuss ways to support employment. Amazing resources are being developed. We come together at events such as the Integrated Employment Network and other trainings and conferences. It’s all very exciting and we’re filled with renewed energy and passion… But then we go home.

In the past, the only opportunities we had to connect and learn from each other came from these face-to-face trainings. These are great, but once we return to our day-to-day activities, questions pop up and we wonder how to actually implement what we’ve learned. We might want to continue a discussion started at the event or pursue a resource that was shared. So the Employment Network Online was born.

The Employment Network Online is a new virtual community that’s designed to provide a place for people to connect locally, statewide, and beyond, in order to learn and work collaboratively. Anyone who is working to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to pursue meaningful careers and earn income in their communities is welcome.
WRA President’s Message

On behalf of the WRA board and those we serve, I would like to thank you for your support and interest. Let each of us ring in the New Year with optimism and resolution to continue to support and promote our mission.

To recap: In 2010 the board co-sponsored the statewide Rehabilitation and Transition Conference with Rehabilitation for Wisconsin, provided scholarships for UW students to attend, conducted membership outreach activities around the state, provided a teleseminar on ethics and sponsored persons with disabilities to attend a Candidate Forum on Long Term Care.

A look ahead: WRA’s work in 2011 will be guided by the goals established by the board for the upcoming year:

**Goal 1:** Increase membership by 10%; specifically target students, lapsed members and new professionals.

**Goal 2:** Continue to explore a state conference partnership with the Association of Persons in Supported Employment.

**Goal 3:** Offer professional training opportunities.

**Goal 4:** Increase Legislative Advocacy opportunities through calls to actions to our members.

**Goal 5:** Increase membership networking opportunities.

Current board members include: Dennis Carriere-Vice President, Amy Thomson-Secretary, Holly Rogers-Treasurer, Megan Grasser, Mark Poffinbarger, DeLeana Strohl-Members at Large, and Jenny Neugart-Consumer Board Member.

It is an honor to serve as the WRA president and I am pleased to be able to report on the accomplishments of the board and its’ committees. I would like to commend the board members and committee chairs for their dedication in carrying out the mission of WRA.

Wisconsin’s Long Term Care Reform from page 1

could include becoming the employer of their support staff. With SDS, the person can purchase pre-determined services from agencies, but they do not have to. National studies show that Self-Directed Supports increases personal satisfaction and improves quality of life for long-term care recipients, at the same or less cost as would be necessary to provide services in licensed, facility-based, or specialized/segregated programs. More than 7,000 people with disabilities and frail elders in Wisconsin have chosen to direct their own supports. This number is growing rapidly as more people learn about Self-Directed Support in Family Care and IRIS.

In the Fall of 2009, InControl Wisconsin, Inc. was established by a group of dedicated stakeholders from private organizations, government agencies and advocacy groups to promote and strengthen the Self-Directed Supports option in Wisconsin. InControl Wisconsin aims to provide a framework to bring together existing best practice and to support everyone involved in meeting the challenges of the new long term care system. InControl Wisconsin is an affiliate of InControl International. Through a partnership with InControl UK and other InControl groups around the world, InControl Wisconsin can share information, research, stories and develop tools to use for Self-Directed Supports in Wisconsin.

Much of 2010 was spent establishing the organization and planning a statewide conference on Self-Determination. Almost 400 people with disabilities, their families and people who support them attended this conference. 2011 will be spent growing the organization, establishing a statewide learning community using distance technology, hosting learning events, and launching some small pilot projects around Supported Living and Self-Directed Employment.

For more information about InControl Wisconsin, Inc visit www.incontrolwisconsin.org.
Angie always tells her boss, Dixie Toberman, “this is my career.” Dixie is the manager of Opportunities Blooming, a greenhouse operation that employs individuals with disabilities. “They’ve really taken ownership,” she says, “and they’re proud of it.” Their enthusiasm is easily noticed.

The greenhouse is part of the initial wave of new businesses created by the Prairie du Chien Opportunity Center, a non-profit organization currently serving 85 clients that is dedicated to providing opportunities for people with disabilities to develop their full potential in society. “We have worked to raise our visibility in the community through our new businesses,” says Pam Ritchie, Opportunity Center Executive Director, “as a way to become fully engaged in our community, put people with disabilities to work, and to raise awareness of the people we serve.”

There is a growing desire to put people with disabilities to work in community integrated settings. However, existing in rural Wisconsin coupled with the recent poor economy, the Opportunity Center and many other similar service providers were challenged to find employers willing to place clients with disabilities. Traditional methods weren’t working, so the Opportunity Center decided to think differently. “We became true social entrepreneurs,” says Ritchie, “identifying community needs and developing new businesses and programs to meet those needs.”

Suddenly, this 45-year old organization is becoming a key source of economic development in southwest Wisconsin.

Another new business launched by the Opportunity Center is the Prairie Street Farmers Market. In addition to providing a needed venue for local farmers to sell their products, the market provides an important distribution channel for the greenhouse. Even more significant to the Opportunity Center, the market provides an important community integration opportunity for greenhouse employees. Toberman says it’s where she sees the greatest advancement in her employees’ abilities. “We had some great workers who were scared to talk to anyone initially,” she says, “but getting them into the community – talking about work and other things – has really helped them blossom.”

The first year of Opportunities Blooming has been so successful they’ve already doubled the size of their greenhouse for the upcoming year.

The next wave of launched businesses is coming this summer. A brand new 6,500 square foot shared-use, incubator kitchen facility is being built. Named Sharing Spaces Kitchen, the new building will be home to an artisan bakery, a food processing and co-packing operation, and a food business incubator program. “There’s a lot going on,” Dan Moris, Sharing Spaces Kitchen Director, says with a smile, “we’re going to become a really big part of this emerging local food economy…and it’s our clients making it happen.”
Employment Network from page 2

There’s no registration fee to join. Since the Employment Network is based on the concept of social learning, it relies on the participation of members. There are many ways of participating, such as:

- **Start or Respond to a Discussion in the Forum** – A place to post those questions that have been bouncing around in your head and to find out what other people are saying or asking, and respond to them.
- **Join a Group** - Sometimes the discussions in the forum lead to a group wanting to find a "meeting spot" to discuss ideas & questions in more depth. Or maybe you already know a group of people who want a gathering place online. You can set up a public or private group.
- **Share Your Ideas in a Blog** – The blog is a great place to see the “ponderings” of other members of this community and to share your own. You can also share announcements or information with the whole community.
- **Post and Watch Videos** – Our video page is one way of sharing videos with each other.
- **Add or Find Exciting Events** – The Network’s Events page can help you find events close to home, around WI, throughout the country and even online. You can find out about current and past events. There’s also a link to the Paths to Employment Resource Center (PERC) calendar.

The Employment Network Online needs people like you. Stop by, check out the discussions, watch some videos and think about how you can contribute to this unique new community. You’ll find the Employment Network at: [http://employmentnetworkwi.org/](http://employmentnetworkwi.org/).

For more information, contact Deb Wisniewski at scgwis@gmail.com.

WRA Member Spotlight! Megan Grasser

Megan Grasser, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Megan Grasser works for the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. As a counselor, Megan works with individuals with a variety of disabilities, ages and backgrounds to help obtain, maintain, and/or improve employment in the community. She empowers people with disabilities to maximize their employment and reach economic self-sufficiency by working as a team with her consumers, employers, and other community partners. She started working for DVR last summer upon graduating from the Rehab Psychology masters program at UW-Madison. She also has an undergraduate in Psychology from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities.

Megan stated that her favorite thing about her job is the opportunity to advocate for people with disabilities and teach them the skills to advocate for themselves. She finds it rewarding to see an individual realize their self-worth and acknowledge their accomplishments as they reach their goals. Megan was selected as a regional representative for Teams Work, which was developed to help facilitate and support the DVR team structure. Teams Work members provide guidance and support in the areas of training, cross-teaming, sharing successful practices and providing resources to existing teams. Megan is also involved in the Portage County Transition Advisory Council to help students with disabilities make a successful transition to the community and work.
Scholarships for College Students Who are Blind

College students who are blind may apply to win one of 30 awards ranging from $12,000 to $3,000 in the National Federation of the Blind Scholarship Program for 2011.

In addition, each winner will be assisted to attend the NFB 2011 Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida.

This program is available solely to college students who are legally blind and living in the United States or Puerto Rico. (Membership in the NFB is not required.)

The annual contest begins November 1, 2010; all documents required from the applicants must be postmarked by the March 31, 2011, deadline.

The application form and full details are available online at www.nfb.org/scholarships.

Questions may be emailed to scholarships@nfb.org.

WRA Member Spotlight! Cayte Anderson

Cayte Anderson is employed with the UW-Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute (SVRI) as an Associate Director and with the Pathways to Independence Projects as the Assistant Director of Operations. Her job consists of writing and managing grants, supervising staff, encouraging staff development, managing budgets, reviewing policy, and developing collaborations. Cayte and her staff enjoy working with people with disabilities “across the lifespan,” with a particular emphasis on integrated, community-based employment. Cayte’s favorite thing about her job is interacting with interesting people who have wonderful ideas on how to improve the “system.” If she could change one thing about her job it would be to have more time to spend on activities such as research and writing.

Cayte graduated from UW-Madison with her M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling in 1997 and worked as a job placement specialist, benefits specialist, and manager before moving into administration and policy work in 2002. She is currently working on her Doctorate in Rehab Psychology.

In her free time, she says that she’s really good at making her friends laugh and enjoys learning how to make bread from scratch. She would also like to learn more about disability in a global context and, on an unrelated note, how to play the cello! Her favorite past-time is spending time with friends and reading a good book; she is currently reading The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets Nest.

When asked what she would like to see WRA bring to its members, she said, “I think WRA has done a great job improving service to its members this year – well done! The only thing I can think of is perhaps additional online training opportunities with CRC credits for members.” Cayte is also President of the National Association of Disability Benefits Specialists (NADBS), a division of NRA, and would be happy to provide information to those interested in learning about this relatively new division. She can be contacted at: Catherine.anderson@wisc.edu.

SVRI Receives Research & Training Grant

The Department of Rehab Psychology and Special Education of UW-Madison and SVRI are the recipients of a $5 million grant for the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Effective Vocational Rehabilitation Service Delivery Practice (RRTC- EBP-VR). This award, from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) will enable SVRI and UW-Madison, in collaboration with Michigan State University, the University of Texas-El Paso, Southern University, and others, to generate and translate relevant contemporary knowledge related to theory-driven, evidence-based vocational rehabilitation practice to improve the employment outcomes of people with disabilities.

The co-principal investigators for the grant are Drs. Fong Chan (UW - Madison) and John Lui (SVRI). The grant award is one million dollars per year for five years. SVRI will be involved with the research phase and the primary lead on the Training and Technical Assistance phase. For more information, contact John Lui at lujj@uwstout.edu.
30th Annual Government Affairs Summit

NRA proudly presents its 30th Annual Government Affairs Summit, being held March 20 – 22, 2011. The summit, entitled “Transition: Today, Tomorrow, Together” will be held at the Alexandria Hilton Hotel on King St. in beautiful, historic Old Town Alexandria, VA. We are honored to have as our opening keynote speaker the Honorable Lynnae Rutledge, Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in the U.S. Department of Education. We will once again honor our qualified rehabilitation counselors with a proclamation and celebration of "National Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day."

For more information, check out www.nationalrehab.org

Complex Rehab Technology

Below is information from NRRTS, the National Registry of Rehabilitation Technology Suppliers regarding their efforts to eliminate "in-home" restrictions in the Medicare program. More information can be found at: http://www.celaadvocacy.org/LiteratureRetrieve.aspx?ID=78498. "Complex Rehab Technology (CRT) products are defined as medically necessary, individually configured devices that require evaluation, configuration, fitting, adjustment or programming. Examples of CRT include individually configured manual wheelchair systems, power wheelchair systems, adaptive seating systems, alternative positioning systems and other mobility devices. These products and services are designed to meet the specific and unique medical, physical, and functional needs of an individual with a primary diagnosis resulting from a congenital disorder, progressive or degenerative neuromuscular disease, or from certain types of injury or trauma.

We are asking Congress to create a separate CRT benefit category under the Medicare program. This would include the elimination of Medicare's "In the Home" restriction for CRT products as well as the requirements laid out by the document "Ensuring Consumer Access to Complex Rehab Technology – Requirements for maximizing outcomes".

Our objective is to improve access for people of all ages, whether covered by Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance."

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2011 Calendar of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr 6-8</td>
<td>RFW/WRA Rehab &amp; Transition Conference.</td>
<td>Osthoff Resort, Elkhart Lake, WI.</td>
<td>For more info, visit <a href="http://www.rfw.org">http://www.rfw.org</a>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 4-5</td>
<td>The Wisconsin Disability Benefits Network Conference.</td>
<td>Heidl House Resort, Green Lake, WI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun 5-8</td>
<td>Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) Mid Year Conference.</td>
<td>Green Bay, WI.</td>
<td>For more info, visit <a href="http://canar.org">http://canar.org</a></td>
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