

THE PATH AHEAD

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Spotlight on Self-Direction in Wisconsin!

Last month, TMG attended the national Self Direction Conference in Baltimore. It's great to know that Wisconsin's IRIS program is one of the largest and strongest self-direction programs in the country.

As an IRIS participant, you have control over your budget to buy the things you need (which is called budget authority), and you can determine who helps you with the things you need (which is called employer authority). In other states, self-direction does not include that same level of choice and control, and there are not as many services available for people to self-direct.

We were excited to share our information at the conference with the hope that more people across the country can benefit from self-direction. Our conference session was entitled, *Clearing the Path Ahead: A Roadmap for Partnering with People to Create Meaningful Self-Determined Lives*.

The most exciting part of the trip was learning that Cindy Bentley, who is enrolled in the TMG IRIS Consultant Agency, and John Mezydlo, a TMG IRIS Consultant, were receiving awards at the conference for their hard work to make self-direction real for so many people (see our article about them on page 3). Recognizing Cindy, John and other

award winners' accomplishments is a wonderful reminder of the difference that control and choice make in people's lives!

As your IRIS Consultant Agency, TMG wants to make your journey in self-direction the best it can be. We appreciate this opportunity to learn with others from across the United States to continue growing our skills to support you, as together, we *clear the path ahead*.



Dave Verban (Left), TMG Senior Learning & Development Consultant; Shanna Jensen (Center), TMG Senior Director of IRIS Consultation Services; and Patti Becker (Right), TMG Manager of Community Partnerships, presented at the Self Direction Conference in Baltimore on May 9, 2017.

Self-Direction Award Winners

TMG is proud to announce that Cindy Bentley, a person enrolled in TMG's IRIS Consultant Agency (ICA) since 2010, and John Mezydlo, a TMG IRIS Consultant, both received national awards during the Self Direction Conference in Baltimore for their great work in helping advance self-direction.

Presented during the conference's first-ever awards ceremony on May 8, John received an award for *Excellence in Information & Assistance* for his wonderful work supporting people enrolled in the TMG ICA. Cindy was awarded *Outstanding Involvement in Self-Direction* for both living an exceptional self-determined life and helping make self-direction more accessible for others.

Cindy's personal story is nothing short of amazing. After spending the first part of her life living in a state institute, Cindy - who has an intellectual disability - had the opportunity to move to an apartment in Milwaukee and start making decisions about her own life. In 2010, Cindy joined the IRIS program and partnered with the TMG ICA to gain further independence, and she hasn't looked back since. After learning to self-direct for herself, Cindy began advocating for others. She was appointed to the Wisconsin Long Term Care Advisory Council by Wisconsin Department of Health Services Secretary, Linda Seemeyer. Cindy is a member of the Survival Coalition of Wisconsin, a statewide advocacy network, and the Milwaukee County Combined Community Services Board, which advises local officials about policies that affect people with disabilities. Cindy is also an international Special Olympics athlete, author and public speaker. She teaches people about self-direction by example and encouragement, and has provided training to the staff at TMG. Cindy has proven time and again that when you give someone the chance to grow into their full

potential, amazing things are possible. Says Cindy, **"You label jars, not people!"**

John has been a TMG IRIS Consultant (IC) since 2013. He's a resourceful team player who brings energy to the TMG team and is passionate about finding solutions for the people he supports. One of the career accomplishments that he is most proud of was when he began a partnership with Shawn - a young man enrolled in IRIS. When they first met, Shawn had no real community that he was a part of. But thanks to John's encouragement, connections and resources, today Shawn leads a thriving self-determined life full of volunteering, woodworking, and wheelchair rugby. In John's own words, **"I show people what is possible. I live with a disability every day and embrace it!"**

Congratulations, Cindy and John - you are both shining examples of self-direction in action!



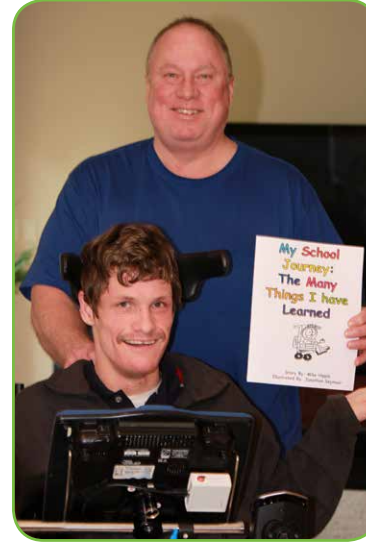
Mike's Story: A Voice for Change

Mike Hipple has a lot to say, and he's made it his mission to make sure people listen. Witty, driven and fearless, the 22-year-old Appleton native is a disability ambassador and a public speaker who shares his stories and knowledge about living with cerebral palsy and how to be a self-advocate.

Even though Mike can't physically speak, he's never let that stop him from telling people what's on his mind. Mike uses a communication device to do his talking – allowing him to speak the same way that Steven Hawking, the famous physicist, speaks. That, along with the control and choice he gets by partnering with TMG and the IRIS program, have been important tools for helping him lead a self-determined life. Mike has been partnering with the TMG ICA since 2014.

“I have a voice to let people know what I'm thinking, what I feel and what I need,” says Mike. “Everybody has the right to be heard. I see it as a basic human right.”

After discovering just how powerful his own voice is, Mike became passionate about helping others learn to communicate better. That's why he started the Wisconsin Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) Network. The organization helps people who use communication devices learn to thrive. It also educates families and



professionals across the state on how to support people who use a communication device. Mike calls the Wisconsin AAC Network his baby.

Along with his work with Wisconsin AAC Network, Mike has written a book for young students with disabilities and he's the secretary of his local Kiwanis club – an international organization that helps children in need. He has also partnered with a woman

named Carrie. Together, they would attend events and tell people about how life-changing communication devices can be. According to Carrie – who later became Mike's first TMG IRIS Consultant – all of Mike's amazing accomplishments are because Mike doesn't know the meaning of the word “quit.”

“He doesn't like to be told no,” says Carrie. “If he hears no, he will find a way. I love that about him.”

While Mike has done so many great things in his young life, he credits a lot of his success to having wonderful support from his friends and family – particularly his parents Sue and Mark, and his older brother Doug, and Doug’s girlfriend, Beth – who have always believed that he could do anything he set his mind to. Mike dreams big and lives the life he wants to live.

“I am the boss of my day. I would have little-to-no say if I couldn’t self-direct,” says Mike. “I wanted to start self-directing because I matter.”

Get Social with TMG!

A lot has been happening lately on TMG’s Facebook and Twitter pages – check it out by searching for “TMG Wisconsin” on these sites to join in on the fun!

There, you can read up on important news and events taking place in the aging and disability advocacy world, learn about inspiring people who live self-directed lives and also see the lighter side of TMG.

Like what you see there? Then be sure to like and follow our pages to show your support! Get in on the action, too, by liking, sharing and commenting on your favorite posts.

Become a part of the TMG social media community today to help all of our voices be heard!

Please remember to avoid sharing personal health information on TMG’s or any other social media pages so that your privacy is protected.



facebook.com/TMGWisconsin



twitter.com/TMGWisconsin

Tips for Taking an Accessible Vacation

Ah summer... That magical time of year when long sunny days and firefly-filled nights inspire everyone to hit the road and take a much-deserved vacation. For people who have physical disabilities or mobility issues, taking a trip can present some challenges. Thankfully, with a bit of planning you can have a great get-away! Here are some resources that will help you prepare for your next journey, as well as ideas for accessible activities and lodging across Wisconsin. To access the links to these articles, visit tmgwisconsin.com/tmg-travel-tips, or simply click on the titles below if you are reading the online version of *The Path Ahead*. Happy travels!

Accessible Trip Planning

Independent Traveler

Learn the best ways to prepare for your upcoming trip and how to advocate for yourself while you're away from home to ensure a smooth journey.

Twelve Things that Make Traveling with a Disability Easier

Get great tips on what to pack for your next vacation. You wouldn't think to bring many of these items, but you'll be glad you brought them along!

Accessible Activities

Six Outdoor Wisconsin Activities for All Abilities

A list of where to find accessible kayaking, beaches, fishing and more throughout Wisconsin.

Wheelchair Accessible Trails Around Wisconsin

Nature-lovers, explore the breathtaking beauty that Wisconsin has to offer on one of its many wheelchair accessible trails across the state.

Things to Do in Milwaukee

Accessible travel writer John Morris, who uses a wheelchair, shares some of Milwaukee's hottest accessible spots in the city.

Accessible Lodging

Wisconsin's Accessible Accommodations

Check out Travel Wisconsin's list of the best accessible lodging options the state has to offer.

Accessible Cabins for People with Disabilities

For those of you who love the outdoors, be sure to book one of Wisconsin State Park's accessible cabins for your next vacation.



TMG to Expand Statewide

TMG is excited to announce that Wisconsin's self-directed, long-term care option, IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-Direct), is coming to **Vilas, Oneida, Forest, Florence** and **Taylor Counties** on **July 1, 2017**.

People can contact their local Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) now to enroll for the program's July 1 start date in these expansion counties. A directory of local ADRCs can be found at: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/adrccontactlist.pdf.

"All of us at TMG are excited to start partnering with people in these counties and help them lead independent lives," said Shanna Jensen, Senior Director of IRIS Consultation Services at TMG. "IRIS is a wonderful program that helps so many, and TMG is honored to be a part of empowering people to create meaningful lives in their communities."

TMG has provided consultant services in the IRIS program since it began in 2008, and is the only IRIS Consultant Agency (ICA) that serves all Wisconsin counties where IRIS is available. Over 13,500 people in Wisconsin have chosen TMG as their ICA. Our staff includes over 320 community-based IRIS Consultants.

Along with IRIS expansion in Adams County in 2017 and an additional IRIS expansion in Dane County scheduled for the first part of 2018, the program will be available in all 72 Wisconsin counties within the next year.

Upcoming Events

Wisconsin Summer Inclusion Institute
July 24 – July 26, 2017
Westwood Conference Center – Wausau, WI

Wisconsin Aging and Disability Network Conference 2017
September 6 – September 8, 2017
Madison Marriott West – Middleton, WI

Wisconsin Self-Determination Conference
November 1 – 3, 2017
Kalahari Resort – Wisconsin Dells, WI

Registration for the Wisconsin Self-Determination Conference is open starting July 1, 2017. Visit www.wi-bpdd.org/index.php/wisconsin-self-determination-conference for more information.





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We're Here to Help!

At the TMG IRIS Consultant Agency (ICA), we value the fact that our employees live and work in communities all around Wisconsin. Our Area Associate Directors provide local leadership for our IRIS Consultant Teams throughout the state. If you have questions about TMG and the services we provide, please visit our website at **tmgwisconsin.com** for more information.



Questions about IRIS,
call: **1-800-223-6048**



For information about the
TMG IRIS Consultant Agency,
visit: **tmgwisconsin.com**