

# Winter 2014-2015 Newsletter: STAY ACTIVE!



## IRIS CONNECTIONS



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# Stay Active!



Continuing to learn, embracing new activities and developing new skills and interests do great things for the body and mind. There are many ways to achieve this, even in the winter! Some people exercise their brain in school or their muscles at the gym. Others fill their days being social with friends and local clubs or organizations. Whatever activity they choose, they are building strong connections and sharing their passions with others.

This edition of IRIS Connections features stories of people who have found activities that fill their lives with joy and purpose. By drawing on your own passions and talents, you can find great ways to be active in your community and improve or maintain your physical and mental health.



## TMG IRIS CONSULTANT JOHN MEZYDLO'S MESSAGE

Staying active after my spinal cord injury 10 years ago was a priority of mine. However, this didn't happen overnight. Before my injury I was going to college for business and playing baseball. When all of that stopped, I had no idea where and how my life was going to be. I received my inspiration to move forward with my life from family and friends.

I started slowly by continuing my education and getting my business degree. To further my independence, I got my driver's license. Then, I was introduced to the sport of wheelchair rugby. Besides the obvious health benefits from training and practices, I gain more strength every day from being around my peers who share a common interest - staying active! I realized quickly that I can accomplish anything. I can work, go to church, play rugby, get involved in charities, get married and have a family someday. The accomplishments I just listed may not be a goal for you. However, I challenge you to take that first step in getting involved in something you're passionate about.

# Kate Knott



Kate Knott is a social butterfly living in Merrill, Wisconsin. With her effortless outgoing personality, Kate has found that one of her passions is enjoying time with the people around her. Kate says, "I like to help in the community, because it makes it more fun when I give back." She stays socially active by using her experience and athletic background to stay involved with many sports teams and organizations.

Kate is a member of the Merrill Lions Club and serves as Lion Tamer for the club. She loves her responsibilities there and she is

greatly valued by the members of the club. She shares, "They like my help, it makes a big difference that I help them." Her Lions Club meets every first and third Monday of the month at the Eagles Club building, and works through a large agenda of business items while enjoying social time and dinner. Kate likes planning events that help Merrill community members.

One of Kate's other big roles in the community is being team manager for the Merrill High School Girls Basketball Team. For the last 17 years, she has helped the team fight for conference and state championships. Kate says, "It's a fun and active group," and she continues to manage the team, "so I can get out of the house more, I go to practice every day, and when it's game time, I go with them on the bus." Her positive attitude is an inspiration to the whole team.

After her duties the Lion Tamer and basketball manager, Kate finds time to go to her local fitness center and help her friend coach water aerobics in addition to swimming on her own for fitness. She is also in three bowling leagues and holds a part-time job at the Weinbrenner Shoe Company. Kate reminds her friends and family that staying busy, exercising and eating healthy make a big difference in your daily life. Though staying active can be a lot of work, Kate feels proud to be counted on for so many things in her community.

# Kate Knott

# Elizabeth Fideler



My name is Elizabeth Fideler. I enjoy going to University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and what they have to offer, like accommodations for students with disabilities. They inspired me to spread my wings and fly and in a couple years I'm going to graduate with my degree in Communications and Public Relations. I've enjoyed meeting other students with disabilities but also students without disabilities. These experiences empower me to see what else is out there, which has given me a lot of confidence and independence.

I also enjoy doing things out of school like swimming, singing and hanging out with friends. I especially love swimming because it makes me feel free; when I'm in the water, I don't have to worry about anything. I am part of the swim team (the J-Hawks) here at UW-Whitewater. My training with them is helping me get ready to hopefully be on Team USA for the Paralympics in 2016. This past summer I also have enjoyed running triathlons. I love the sport because you get to run, bike and swim all in one. Dare2tri has given me the confidence and tools to be able to compete in triathlons.

I enjoy trying new things and finding what's out there. I always tell people that even if you have a disability, don't let it hold you back. Anything is possible! You might have to find it and there are tons of things out there we can do, like everything everyone else is doing. For instance, I took a summer trip to Yellowstone with UW-Whitewater for a Biology class. I never thought I would be able to experience an opportunity like that. I met new friends and experienced a lot of things. I don't want my disability to hold me back, and never say never!

Elizabeth Fideler

# Emily Fideler

My name is Emily Fideler and I'm from Fontana, Wisconsin. I go to the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and I think that higher education helps you later on in life. Going to college can help you find jobs and I want to show others that people with disabilities can go to college just like everybody else.

It's a challenge to go to college, but it's also a fun experience. You get to meet people and be active in the community. I like to play sports because I've gotten to meet a lot of my friends playing wheelchair basketball in Chicago. I always like to smile on the court and I have made lifetime friends that way. For example, I still talk to one of my friends at school who got me into basketball. I also like to go to sports camp in summer because I like to go waterskiing, learning about different sports and just to be out of the house for a week!



Emily Fideler

# Barbara Buchanan



Barbara (Barb) Buchanan, a lively woman living in Muskego, Wisconsin, recommends staying busy this winter. She shares, “there are ways of giving back and being active even when you can’t always get out.” For example, Barb has been crafting, reading a number of books recommended to her and volunteering to set up meals in her apartment building.

Barb has always enjoyed crafting. Even though she doesn’t have much spare cash, she has found a great way to knit for pleasure while also giving back to her local community. Barb started talking with a man who comes from a faith-based community center in town who collects items to donate to families in need. She shared with him her joy for knitting and chats regularly with him. He decided to help Barb continue to do something she loved. Barb shares, “He collected a whole bunch of yarn for me so I could knit hats, scarves and mittens so I can give them back to the church to give out!” She also completes old puzzles to see if all the pieces are there and donates them. Now Barb has a new friend, is staying busy and feels a sense of accomplishment after donating her knitted items to those who need them.

Barb is an avid reader. As a former member of more than one book club, she has read a large variety of books and gives great book recommendations. She’s always sharing her love of books with others, even on a vacation she recently took with her family. Barb says, “I was hanging out at the pool and spoke with interesting people from around the world, and they recommended books to me!” She chats with others in her apartment about what she’s reading all the time, even when she’s bringing the meals around to people who receive them. Her volunteering gets her moving and allows her to share her sense of humor with others. She spreads cheer by bringing her neighbors not only their meals but also the desserts that they love. Barb started a system where she alternates the floor she starts passing meals out on, “so they don’t fight over the pie!”

When Barb isn’t out making people laugh, she’s staying busy taking care of her dog and cat. Her infectious smile and great optimism keep her excited and ready for the activities she’ll be a part of in the days to come. She admits that she takes a two-hour nap “that keeps me going” each afternoon to stay healthy and ready for the rest of her day. Barb’s last piece of advice is, “We are all caring survivors, and we have all survived something. Care for yourself in the best way that you can. Your caring will help you in a positive way and then you can be caring to the world around you.” Barb shows that you can have a positive impact on the community no matter what obstacles appear to be in your way.

# Resources



**TimeBanks** are a way for people to stay active with others through locally-organized networks. They are based on the concept that every person can share a valuable skill with others. Everyone's skill holds the same value, whether it's teaching someone to play cribbage, making a pie or reading a book. Instead of using money, people in these networks exchange "TimeBank hours." Any interested person is welcome to join their local TimeBank. To learn more about TimeBanks, including whether there is one near you and how to start one, check out [www.timebanks.org](http://www.timebanks.org).

Your local **Parks and Recreation** department is a great resource that organizes teams and activities for everyone living in the community. Check your newspaper for a Parks and Recreation news column or check your mail for a newsletter. Your city's website should also have a phone number for the Parks and Recreation department that you could call for more information.

**Meetup** is a large website that gathers neighbors to learn, share or participate in activities about common interests. Groups are specialized by topic and by area so you can find groups within five miles of your town or city. Check out [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com) today to get involved!



## EVENTS

### February 18 - 19, 2015

Wisconsin Transition  
Conference  
Kalahari Resort,  
Wisconsin Dells, WI

### March 17, 2015

Disability Advocacy Day  
Monona Terrace and State  
Capitol, Madison, WI

### April 8, 2015

6th Annual Youth  
Transition Conference  
University of Wisconsin-  
Stout, Menomonie, WI

### April 9, 2015

Employment  
First Conference  
Kalahari Resort,  
Wisconsin Dells, WI



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