

Centerpoint

Taking Control of Tomorrow

Centerpoint Newsletter. A publication of Options for Independent Living Inc

SUMMER ISSUE 2023

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Summer Greetings from Options for Independent Living!

We are excited to share Options summer newsletter with all of you. Between state budget advocacy, community resource fairs, independent living classes and many other things it has been an action-packed summer at Options. This newsletter will give you a snapshot of the things happening at Options. I wanted to highlight a couple of the latest developments and upcoming celebrations.

Celebrating ADA's 33rd Anniversary: On July 26th, we proudly marked the 33rd Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This milestone serves as a reminder of the progress we have made and the work that lies ahead in creating a more accessible and inclusive world for everyone. Options Assistant Director, Sandy Popp, played a key role in helping to drive legislation forward to adopting the Act. Check out Option's Facebook page as we shared a video of Sandy recalling the momentous days and action that lead up to the ADA being passed.

Advocating for IL Funding: While we celebrate the ADA anniversary, we must also address the challenges we face. Unfortunately, the recent request for an increase to base funding for independent living centers, like Options, did not get through the State Joint Finance Committee and therefore, did not make it into the 2023-25 biennial budget. We would like to thank everyone who contacted their legislator to request a funding increase! Despite this setback, we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing crucial services to our community. Your support and advocacy are critical in ensuring that our voices are heard, and we can continue making a difference in the lives of those we serve.

3rd Annual Community Expo Event: As summer progresses, we are eagerly preparing for our much-anticipated 3rd Annual Community Expo event. Mark your calendars for August 24, 2023. This event will be a wonderful opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, get rid of your unwanted durable medical equipment, get your wheelchair washed, learn about the resources available, and foster a stronger network of support for people with disabilities. The newsletter will have more details about the event.

Wishing you a fantastic summer filled with warmth, joy, and community connections!

With gratitude, ☺

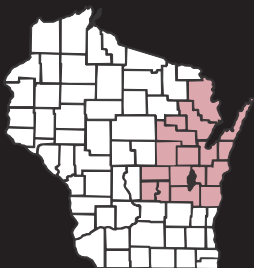


Josh Theis
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Serving 17 counties in
Northeast Wisconsin
and the Fox Valley

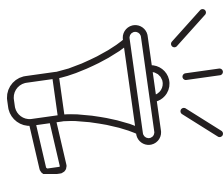
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Mark Your Calendars

Mark your calendar for Options Community Expo

Thursday, August 24th from 3 pm – 7 pm at 555 Country Club Road. The day will include a durable medical equipment drive, a wheelchair wash and safety

check, wheelchair van demos, adaptive recreation equipment, free food from the Brown County ADRC accessible food truck, and much more! So, bring your used medical equipment to donate, get your wheelchair cleaned and inspected, your belly filled with good food, check out the modified vans, try out some great recreation equipment and maybe win a prize! Hope to see you there, it will be a fun day for all!

We are also providing collection sites the week before the Expo to allow people from all over our service area to donate their gently used durable medical equipment. Below are the sites:

Tuesday, August 15

* 10am-12 - ADRC of Marinette County 2500 Hall Avenue, Marinette, WI 54143

* 1:30-3pm - Wolf River Region ADRC/Oconto Falls 229 Van Buren St., Oconto Falls, WI 54154

Wednesday, August 16

* 10am-12 - ADRC of Sheboygan County 650 Forest Avenue, Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085

* 1:30-3pm ADRC of the Lakeshore/Manitowoc 1701 Michigan Avenue, Manitowoc, WI

Thursday, August 17

* 10am – 12 pm - Green Lake County ADRC held at Green Lake Meal sight, 649 N Margaret St., Markesan, WI 53946

* 1:30-3pm - Waupaca County Courthouse 811 Harding St., Waupaca, WI 54981

Friday, August 18

* 1:30-3:30pm - Oneida Nation, Elderly & Disability Services 2907 S. Overland Rd., Hobart, WI 54143

Meet Options New Staff - Please meet Karen Phillips...

Greetings! My name is Karen Phillips! I am a Registered Nurse with over 30+ years of experience in the health care field. I have a strong background in Behavioral Health, Psychiatric and Education just to name a few.

I spent the better part of my youth growing up in the Northwoods in a small town known for the legend of the "Hodag." I have lived mostly in Green Bay for the past 35 years with a short stint living in Florida for 8 years. But we found our way back to the place we call home and are very happy. My husband and I have been together for 36 years and together we have 5 children. 4 boys and 1 girl. We enjoy the outdoors fishing, swimming, picnics, spending time with family and traveling when we are able.

I enjoy meeting new people and offering my assistance in any way that I can. I am thrilled to be starting as the Director of Personal Assistance Services! Welcome Karen, we are thrilled to have you as part of Options Team! ○



Modification Navigator (NAV) Pilot Program Grant Updates

Options for Independent Living Inc (Options) provided services to 19 Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) members/IRIS Participants during the first quarter of the grant period ending June 30, 2023. NAV Funding was used to purchase a wheelchair docking pin that allowed a member access to the community and employment in days instead of months.

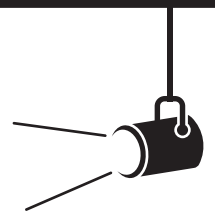
A temporary modular wheelchair ramp allowed another member to safely get in/out of his house without having to crawl up and down stairs on his hands and knees. Options has also received referrals from IRIS Agencies for a Participants who are having difficulty obtaining cost estimates.

The NAV Pilot Program helps to remove barriers in member's homes to create affordable, safe, and accessible housing. NAV also assists with members needing simple vehicle modifications and/or adaptive equipment.

For more information contact Options at (920) 490-0500 and ask for Steve LaFrombois. ○

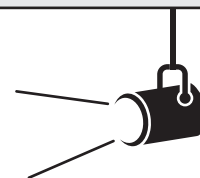
Consumer Spotlight - Navigator Program

Sandra is on IRIS and received recommendations from Options for Independent Living (Options) in 2022 to install a wheelchair ramp. She struggled for over a year to find contractors willing to provide estimates for her ramp, partially due to her rural location. Sandra was referred to Options Modification Navigator Pilot (NAV) Program by her IRIS Consultant. Options Modification Navigator was able to assist her by obtaining cost estimates. Less than a month after Options received the referral, Sandra can now enter/exit her home safely and independently. ○



Consumer Spotlight - AT Program

By Benjamin Villalovas



I came to Options for Independent Living, early this spring, after searching for resources to help me reach some of my independence goals. A friend of mine recommended that I should reach out to Calvin, one of Options Assistive Technology Specialists. I told him my ideas and he was instrumental in helping me find ways to achieve them.

One of my goals was to help tidy up my house. Calvin introduced me to the Occupational Therapy Intern. She and I brainstormed techniques to help me to open drawers in the bathroom and my dresser drawers when putting away laundry. She came up with tying soft, long ropes on the knobs of the drawers which made opening them much easier. To help me with cleaning the living room and kitchen, she attached pool noodles to my dust mop and vacuum handles to make them larger and easier to use. Even though she did this a few months ago, I still use her creative adaptations daily.

Calvin helped me to find a phone that had a microphone instead of a handpiece. It has a helpful remote that scans through the preset phone numbers. It sure helps me to make calls without assistance.

I have difficulty using my hands for eating. Calvin was able to get hold of a robotic self feeding device called Obi. I used the device for 1 week as a home trial. The device gently scoops food from 1 of 4 bowls and presents the food to me via a plastic spoon, which is magnetically attached to the device. It was helpful in allowing me to eat independently, at my own pace, but I feel I would have to spend more time with it to make it work smoothly for me. I would even be interested in having my own Obi.

Concerning computer access and gaming, we found an Easy Ball mouse at Options that helped me use my foot to finally give me access for emails and the internet. With gaming, we tried multiple game controllers, and this is still a work in progress. In the future, I may pursue adaptive ideas to help people like me access computer games with their feet. It is something I wish I had while growing up.

In addition, Calvin discussed bidets to help with my independence. To gain more knowledge, I tried the one in the Options accessible bathroom. I now have one in my home and find it extremely helpful. I am in the process of ordering a communication device to help me talk easier with others and to tell them some of my amazing jokes. I was already on the long path to getting a communication device when I met Calvin, but he gave me some helpful information that I used while picking out the right one.

I would like to thank Calvin for all that he has done to help me and his patience when I talk, which I know can be hard to understand at times. I truly appreciate all that he, the Student Intern and Options have done to help me thus far. ○

BENEFITS BUZZ - *The Inflation Reduction Act's Part B Insulin Price Took Effect July 1*

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) capped out-of-pocket costs for insulin medications for people with Medicare. Coinsurances and copays for insulin covered under Part D have been limited to \$35 a month for a month's supply of each medication since January 1. Starting Saturday, July 1, beneficiaries whose insulin is covered under Part B will also enjoy these protections.

Resuming Public Health Care Renewals

There were special rules in place due to the COVID pandemic that allowed people to keep their Medicaid or BadgerCare Plus regardless of their income or assets, those rules ended. However, people who were enrolled in Medicaid or BadgerCare Plus while those special rules were in place get to keep the protections until their next healthcare renewal.

Wisconsin started doing healthcare renewals again in June 2023. They sent people on Medicaid or BadgerCare Plus notices telling them the date of their next assigned healthcare renewal. They will also send them a renewal packet about two weeks before their renewal month. People should not renew until they receive their renewal packet. Once they receive it, they should renew it as soon as possible. Individuals can visit <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/renewalstatus.htm> to find the "just right" time to renew based on their healthcare renewal date. People enrolled in Medicaid or BadgerCare Plus should make sure the state has their up-to-date contact information. ○

Reimbursement Available For Interpretive Services

For Members Who Are Deaf Or Hard Of Hearing Or Who Have Limited English Proficiency. Effective for dates of service (DOS) on and after August 1, 2023, ForwardHealth will reimburse interpretive services provided to BadgerCare Plus and Medicaid members who are deaf, hard of hearing or have limited English proficiency (LEP). A member with LEP is someone who does not speak English as their primary language and has a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

Covered Interpretive Services: ForwardHealth will cover interpretive services for deaf or hard of hearing members or members with LEP when the interpretive service and the medical service are provided to the member on the same DOS and during the same time as the medical service. A Medicaid-enrolled provider must submit for interpretive services on the same claim as the medical service, and the DOS they are provided to the member must match. Interpretive services cannot be billed by HMOs and managed care organizations (MCOs). At least three people must be present for the services to be covered: the provider, the member, and the interpreter.

More information is available at <https://www.forwardhealth.wi.gov/kw/pdf/2023-28.pdf>. ○


RECREATION NEWS

Adaptive Adventures Beach Trials

Options adaptive recreation program, Adaptive Adventures, has been busy the past two years writing grants and acquiring adaptive recreation equipment to provide opportunities for people with disabilities in our community to partake in adventures that they would otherwise not be able to partake. All the equipment we purchase is available for people to use for no cost.

Recently, we decided to put some equipment to the test so that we could better understand the limitations. The pictures above show the results of the day. We took our Action Trackchair and FreedomTrax to Cave Point County Park and Whitefish Dunes State Park in Door County to explore rough, rooted trails, rock, and sand beaches. We were also able to test out a FreeWheel brought by one of the participants and Wheeliez beach wheelchair provided by Whitefish Dunes State Park. All the equipment proved to be extremely successful. We were able to traverse heavily rooted trails, rocks, fine sand beaches and even get into the water. Brian has a spinal cord injury from a car accident 20 years ago, was joined by his two children, and Autumn who has a spinal cord injury from a car accident 21 years ago was joined by her son and mother. Neither have been on the beach since their injury. Neither have ever been able to experience the beach with their children.

That day Brian watched his children play in the waves and Autumn played frisbee with her 10-year-old son in the sand for the first time. "Being able to go on the beach safely and independently with my son will be a memory forever etched into my heart! The exhilarating feeling of wheeling on the sand, being in control of my own path and destination was amazing! The ability to be on the beach and not watch from afar was something I have never been able to do until trialing the adaptive recreation equipment that was provided by Options. Prior to this I had not been on a beach independently in over 21 years! I cannot wait to use this equipment again to make memories with my son!" Autumn said after the trip.

If you'd like to learn more about this equipment and how you or someone you know can experience the same type of experience, please contact Calvin at 920-393-1037 or calvinr@optionsil.org to check on equipment availability and learn about great places to visit. 



Want to Get Involved in Legislative Advocacy? Join Act Now!

Do you want your voice to be heard, but feel your voice alone would not be enough? Join Options legislative advocacy network, Act Now! Individuals in the network receive legislative alerts and updates on issues impacting people with disabilities. When an alert or update is received, everyone on the network is encouraged to pursue the issue by contacting their area legislators, therefore combining your voice with many! Act Now alerts can be delivered either through email or US Postal Mail.

Contacting your legislators about issues that may affect you, or someone you know, is important. Your legislators want to hear firsthand how legislation being considered can impact your life positively or negatively. It helps in their decision making. Joining Act Now will assist you in those efforts. This network will educate you on the issues and help you to advocate more effectively. The more people in the network, the greater the impact.

If you are interested in joining Act Now, contact Sandy Popp at Options (920) 393-1043 or toll-free at (888) 465-1515, ext.179. ☉

Options LEND Program Highlights

Our LEND program at Options for Independent Living plays a vital role in keeping people safe and independent in their own home. Our local community graciously donates to us their gently used durable medical equipment, which we then refurbish and clean and give back to the community free of charge. Our LEND program is at times the only means of obtaining equipment in our local area without paying out of pocket or waiting for funding to come through insurance.

Options LEND program has done a great job distributing donated durable medical equipment. Between January 1st and June 30th, 2023, our LEND program has loaned 619 devices to 405 consumers in our service area. We have saved our community \$72,190 dollars by implementing reuse of durable medical equipment and keeping items out of our local landfills.

LEND Testimonials:

"I am very happy with the walker I picked up for my wife. So much that I will be using it too! I will be coming back for another walker in the future so that we both have one!" - Anonymous Consumer

"Thank you so much for getting us the transport chair. My wife seemed reluctant to take this, because she thought it meant she'd always be in this 'wheelchair.' So, it took a while for me to explain it was only for using on long walks that she would not otherwise be able to handle, such as hikes, farmers markets, etc. She thinks she can endure as much as she used to, but she is slowing down a lot and gets tired quickly. Anyway, thank you again." - Anonymous Consumer

"We recently borrowed one of your wheelchairs for our vacation to Door County. My mother had her 80th birthday and two weeks before she herniated a disk in her back. She fell and twisted her knee as well. There is no way we would have been able to have the celebration we did without the help of your wheelchair. Thank you so much for letting us borrow it for the weekend." - Anonymous consumer ☉

Tech Closet News

OPTIONS AT Specialist can assess an individual with a disability to determine the role assistive technology can play in achieving greater independence. For more information on the pictured technology or other assistive technology that can help you reach your goal of independence, contact Calvin Richtig, **OPTIONS AT Specialist**, at 920-393-1037 or toll-free at 888-465-1515 ext 130.

Assistive technology partially supported by the WisTech, Assistive Technology Program. Telecommunication partially funded by the Universal Service Fund (USF.)

WisTech

Assistive
Technology Program

NEW Assistive Technology Serene Alert System with Doorbell and Bed Shaker

The new and improved alert system with an LCD screen receiver and doorbell transmitter, this kit also includes a wired bed shaker in case you have difficulty waking up to just the sound of an alarm. The updated alert system has an audible speaking voice that informs you when a specific alarm is set off in your home. This device is perfect for someone who may be visually impaired but still needs to be told that a person is at the front door, or a smoke alarm is going off somewhere in the home. This device also includes a flashing light and a loud ringer to get your attention if you are hearing impaired.

If you'd like more information about this item or would like a demonstration of how it works reach out to Ian Kaster (Assistive Technology Specialist) at 920-393-1053.



What is TEPP?

TEPP (Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program) helps people with disabilities buy equipment they need to use basic telephone services. The TEPP is paid for by the Wisconsin Universal Service Fund (USF) established by the Public Service Commission. Money is collected from Wisconsin telephone service providers to fund the USF. TEPP requires that an applicant:

- Be a Wisconsin resident.
- Be a person who is deaf, hard of hearing, speech impaired, or mobility or motion impaired.
- Needs special equipment to use the telephone in the home or when traveling (like a TTY, amplification, visual alert system, etc.).

There is no age or income limit, but an individual can only get a TEPP voucher once every three years for the same type of disability. For more information on the TEPP program contact Ian Kaster, Options AT Specialist at 920-393-1053. ☎

Options has HOME funds for Home Accessibility, Rehabilitation, or Repair

The HOME Loan Program provides deferred payment/ no interest second mortgage loans to make homes accessible or make home repairs. The loans are focused on providing resources to households that include someone who has a disability or is older and is at low-to-moderate income status. Options receives funds for the HOME from the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development through the State of Wisconsin Dept. of Administration, Division of Housing to administer the HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME Loan Program).

The loan must be paid back when the property is sold, transferred or ceases to be the borrower's principal place of residence. Types of projects include (but not limited to) ramp construction, bathroom, kitchen and bedroom modifications, along with general housing rehabilitation and repairs.

The counties served by this program include Brown (outside Green Bay City limits), Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Marquette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Sheboygan, Waupaca, Waushara, and Winnebago Counties. Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements to be considered for a loan. For more information contact Steve LaFrombois at stewel@optionsil.org, 920-393-1044, or toll-free at 1-888-465-1515, ext. 122. ☉

Options Personal Assistance Program for Those on Medicaid

Options' Personal Assistance Services (PAS) Program empowers people & families with disabilities to manage their in-home cares, including the selection of their Care Worker so that they can maintain a strong relationship with them and remain involved in the daily life of their family.

Certified to provide services through Medicaid and to sub-contract services through IRIS, Options' PAS program has been helping adults in need of in-home cares for years.

Benefits of Using Options for Personal Care Services:

- Options is not a Staffing Agency. Individuals can have family or friends provide the cares.
- Options can provide training for new Care Workers.
- A Case Manager will provide supervision of the Care Worker & coordinate service needs.
- Benefits including Health, Dental & Vision insurance as well as Retirement Savings Accounts for full-time Care Workers (30+ hrs/week).

For More Information contact: Val Tschampl – PAS Program Director. valeriet@optionsil.org. 920-393-1036. Toll Free: 888-465-1515 ext. 182

Jennifer Lardinois – CLTS Case Manager / Care Coordinator. jenniferL@optionsil.org. 920-393-1032. Toll Free: 888-465-1515 ext. 181 ☉

Wisconsin WisLoan Program

WisLoan is a statewide alternative loan program helping Wisconsin residents with a disability purchase assistive technology that assists them in living more independently and productively.

Any Wisconsin resident with a disability over the age of 18 in need of assistive technology or home modifications is eligible to apply for a loan. Some examples of assistive technology include wheelchairs, hearing aids, Closed Circuit Televisions (CCTV's), and vehicles with modifications, or the modifications necessary to make a vehicle accessible.

For more information or to apply for WisLoan call Options at 920-490-0500 or toll-free at 1-888-465-1515.

WisLoan is a federally-funded project of the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation, and a cooperative service of the Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services, IndependenceFirst, and BMO Harris Bank.

Telework Loan Program

The Wisconsin Telework program is a statewide, alternative loan program that allows Wisconsin residents with disabilities to purchase computers and other equipment needed to work from home or from other remote sites, e.g. work on the road or at a telework center.

Loan funds can be used to purchase equipment, training to use equipment, extended warranties, and cost of maintenance and repairs. For more information, contact the staff at Options for Independent Living at 920-490-0500 or toll-free at 1-888-465-1515.

This program is made possible through a grant from Rehabilitative Services Administration and authorized by Section (303)b of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended and implemented by subsequent program regulation 34 C F R Part 373. The Department of Workforce Development-Division of Rehabilitation received the grant and provides programmatic and fiscal oversight. IndependenceFirst, a community based and consumer-controlled independent living center based in Milwaukee, administers the program in partnership with BMO Harris Bank and Wisconsin Independent Living Centers. ○



Mission Statement

OPTIONS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING, serving people with disabilities in 17 counties of Northeast Wisconsin, is the pre-eminent non-profit organization of choice to empower people with disabilities. Options provides opportunities, through advocacy and education, for individuals with all disabilities and ages, to actively access their communities, maximize their independence, and connect with the resources and funding available to them.

Visit us on our Website or Facebook!

Website: www.optionsil.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/optionsil.greenbay/>

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Upcoming Event!

Counties Served

Annual Community Expo

Thursday, August 24th

Medical Equipment Donation Drive,
Wheelchair Wash, Free Food
and more!

See page 2 for more information.

Brown
Calumet
Door
Fond du Lac
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Marinette
Marquette
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