



Director's Notes

It's the time of year when Headwaters begins preparing for all of our summer lawn maintenance contracts, and that includes preparing to maintain the Department of Transportation Waysides in the area. (It seems weird to be saying this when we still have so much snow on the ground!) Headwaters has been a part of Wisconsin's Rest Area Maintenance (RAM) Program since it began in Wisconsin in 1987. The Program consists of 126 roadside sites in 39 counties in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) owns these sites and acts as the program administrator. WisDOT contracts with Rehabilitation for Wisconsin, Inc. (RFW) to provide program management services. WisDOT also contracts with 23 Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) like Headwaters, to provide the custodial care and landscape maintenance services at these roadside sites. Headwaters maintains all of the seasonal wayside sites throughout Forest, Oneida, and Vilas Counties.

For the Program as a whole, all of the year-round rest areas and approximately one-half of the seasonal waysides with rustic toilets are maintained through the program. The remaining half of the seasonal waysides are maintained by the Wisconsin County Highway Departments. The program goals are:

- to provide the best-maintained roadside facilities in the nation and;
- to provide maximum employment opportunities to citizens with disabilities.

Feedback received from visitors to Wisconsin's rest areas indicate that they among the best-maintained in the country. In FY 2015, visitors who resided in 35 different states and 3 countries rated the rest area maintenance services on average at 1.48 with a scale of one (best) to four (worst). RAM Program FY 2016 Statistics:

- Employed 375 individuals with a disability.
- 2 individuals were promoted to a supervisory position.
- 33 individuals moved to other jobs in their community due to the work experience and training they received by working at RAM Program sites.

These employment opportunities have allowed people to achieve greater independence and self-sufficiency within their communities.

Below is a picture of the Headwaters RAM crew being recognized for 30 years with the Program:





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Headwaters Goes to Madison to be Heard

Representatives Edming and Anderson and Senator Tiffany have introduced LRB-0753 - The Employment First Bill - that is supported by employment providers, disability advocacy organizations and people with disabilities statewide. This bill is a positive sign of collaboration between disability groups. Headwaters wrote a letter of support for the bill, and took a small motivated group to Madison to support it during the hearings for the bill. One of our self-advocates was invited to speak as an Employment First Ambassador. Her message was powerful and heartfelt.

A Short Summary of the Bill:

- The bill requires state agencies (DPI, DHS, DVR) to set Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) as their priority employment policy.
- The bill specifically protects a person's choice of facility-based employment services or sheltered work. These services are still allowable if provided in accordance with current law. This element was added to the bill to provide assurance and secure support from service providers.
- The bill requires state agencies to collaborate and develop a joint plan to improve rates of CIE. They will identify barriers and discuss policy changes or data sharing agreements that can help. Agencies are required to work with stakeholders.
- State agencies are required to set benchmarks and goals (jointly and by individual agency) for improvement in CIE rates. This will include measuring number of people working, wages, hours working, etc.
- State agency plans and reports on progress must be published on a public website.
- The bill requires that DHS assess how to conduct a study that would tell us how people's services are changing because of this new policy - asking questions about whether services are reduced or enhanced. This includes an assessment of any change or reduction in use of facility-based employment (sheltered workshop) services.





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Advocacy Day in Madison, WI

Anniversaries

January

Deanna B. 23 years

February

March

Lacey B. 11 years
Joanne L. 2 years

Birthdays

Heather P 1/10
Joe S 1/11
Russel B 1/12
Jonathan E 1/16
Alex B 1/18
Bea Y 1/20
Tracy N 2/09
Terry Z 2/13
Chad P 2/18
Missy Y 2/23
James O 3/03
Missy J 03/19
Carol M 03/20
Holly C 03/23
Natalie S 03/23

On March 20, 2018, a group of Headwaters participants made a trip down to Madison to meet at the State Capitol with Senator Tom Tiffany and Representative Rob Swearingen. These meetings were part of Disability Advocacy Day, which is an annual event where people with disabilities from across Wisconsin meet to advocate for the issues that matter to them. The main issues our group talked about were the lack of community jobs and transportation in Rhinelander. The group was especially grateful for the opportunity to meet with Senator Tiffany, and thank him and his staff for working so hard on the Employment First Bill. Shortly after they left Madison, the Employment First Bill passed!





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Headwaters Headlines

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April is Autism Awareness Month

The aim of this month is to educate the public about autism.

Autism is a complex mental condition and developmental disability, characterized by difficulties in the way a person communicates and interacts with other people.

Autism can be present from birth or form during early childhood

(typically within the first three years). Autism is a lifelong developmental

disability with no single known cause. People with autism are classed as having Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and the terms autism and ASD are often used interchangeably. A wide spectrum disorder, people with autism have a set of symptoms unique to themselves; no two people are the same.

While no two people with autism will have the same set of symptoms, there are common characteristics found in those with this complex disability. Briefly, these characteristics include:

Social Skills — people with autism have problems interacting with others

Empathy — empathy is the ability to recognize and understand the feelings of another person. People with autism find it harder to show empathy to others although they can be taught to acknowledge the others feelings.

Physical Contact — in some cases, autistic people do not like physical contact such as hugs, tickling or physical play with others.

Sudden Changes To Their Environment — a sudden change in the surrounding environment may affect a person with autism.

Speech — speech can be affected in people with autism. 'Echolalia' is a typical speech symptom in which the person repeats words and phrases that they hear.

Changes To Behavior and Routine — people with autism often display repetitive behavior in which they repeat the same action many times over.

