



THE
PATH
AHEAD

Summer 2015 Newsletter

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www.tmgwisconsin.com

New Name

You may have noticed that your TMG newsletter has a new name! ***The Path Ahead*** is your quarterly newsletter – created just for IRIS enrollees by the only IRIS Consultant Agency that’s available everywhere IRIS is – TMG.

Your IRIS Consultant is a member of the TMG team. All together, there are over 500 TMG staff members in communities throughout Wisconsin, working hard to deliver the best IRIS experience possible. We do that by taking the time to learn about you, your long-term care goals and the supports available in your community to help you achieve those goals.

The best part about ***The Path Ahead*** are the stories from people who show how self-direction works for them every day in creating their best possible life. Would you like to share your IRIS experience with others in the program? Talk to your IRIS Consultant, or visit **www.tmgwisconsin.com** and click on “**Share Your Story.**” You might be featured in an upcoming issue of ***The Path Ahead!***

Upcoming Events of Interest

-  **August 6 - 7, 2015**
2015 Wisconsin Healthy Aging Summit
Holiday Inn Convention Center – Stevens Point, WI
-  **August 31 – September 3, 2015**
National Home & Community Based Services Conference
Washington Hilton Hotel - Washington, DC
-  **October 14 - 16, 2015**
All Disabilities Adult Protective Services Conference
Wilderness Resort – Wisconsin Dells, WI
-  **November 9 - 11, 2015**
2015 Wisconsin Self-Determination Conference
Kalahari Resorts – Wisconsin Dells, WI

Kathryn's Path Ahead: Navigating the "Real" World



It's a description that could fit any number of 19-year-old women: high school graduate; former varsity cheerleader and troupe manager; self-taught make-up artist; aspiring actress; reliable worker with four different part-time jobs. And of course, she's interested in boys.

Kathryn has Down syndrome, but she and her family don't view that condition as a limitation. In fact, with the support of IRIS and her TMG IRIS Consultant, Kathryn is on the road to complete independence.

"IRIS is the most revolutionary thing," said Kathryn's mother, Julie. "Kelly, our TMG IRIS Consultant, asks things like, 'How do you envision this happening?' She helps me figure out how to organize our goals and does whatever it takes to get us to 'Yes, this can happen.'"

A recent high school graduate in the southeastern Wisconsin community of Brookfield, Kathryn uses her self-directed budget and employer authority, in part, to hire an experienced Community Connector. Mary Clare Carlson's job is to help connect Kathryn with an unsegregated community – the "real" world, as Julie said – in order to help her achieve complete independence in the next five years.

"Kathryn wasn't born into a 'special needs' world," Julie told *The Path Ahead*. "Mary Clare helps her navigate in the community at large and that's been very beneficial to Kathryn and our family."

Employment is a big part of Kathryn's path to independence. She does office work for a neighbor, holds part-time hours at Noodles & Company and, given her love of make-up artistry, has recently acquired job experience at the Boston Store cosmetics counter.

"When you put people into the typical population, they start acting as if that's their crowd," Julie said. "It does wonders for Kathryn's confidence. She considers herself part of the community."

Some day, if Kathryn gets her way, she'll live in a community among the stars. It is her dream to become a famous television actress, and given her motivation and success so far, we wouldn't bet against her realizing that goal. And TMG is proud to be a part of that dream.

"TMG is committed to partnering with us to make our goals and ideas work," Julie told us.

Madie's Path Ahead: Music and Sports



For nearly a decade, Madie has been involved in Special Olympics, swimming and playing basketball, softball, volleyball, bocce ball and running track. She practices at the local YMCA, where many of her friends work.

But a year and a half ago, Madie, a 22-year-old woman with Down syndrome, decided she wanted to develop a new talent: singing. So Madie and her TMG IRIS Consultant went to work to make voice lessons part of Madie's life and found a professional voice teacher in her community.

“She loves singing and has no problem singing in front of people,” said Madie’s mother, Mary Beth. “Last fall, she had her first recital, and now, she loves singing her favorite Meghan Trainor song at karaoke.”

Music and sports – plus her new job at Fiesta Cancun in Oconomowoc and her volunteer time at a local senior center – keep Madie plenty busy as she works toward her ultimate goal of living independently and getting married one day. They are goals that Madie shares freely with her TMG IRIS Consultant, John.

John has his own disability. Following a spinal cord injury a decade ago, John began using a wheelchair not only to get around for work, but to continue an active lifestyle that includes playing rugby.

“Madie sees him as the coolest guy and loves the fact that he got married last year,” Mary Beth told *The Path Ahead*. “She gets that they have something in common and that’s a special bond.”

So special, in fact, that John has become Madie’s confidant. “When Madie and I meet with John, I’ll just stay for a couple of minutes and leave them alone to talk,” Mary Beth said. “And as soon as I leave, she’ll talk with John about everything and anything. He knows that she wants to live alone and get married some day, and since John has done that, he talks with her about it and encourages her to take steps forward to realize those goals.”

As Madie grows to become more and more independent, Mary Beth can be more of a mom and less of a caregiver – a new family dynamic she attributes to Madie’s three years in IRIS.

Olivia's Path Ahead: Independence



Four years ago, Olivia's support choices were so limited that her mother, Judy, was worried she might end up staying in a group home, which Judy describes as a "devastating experience."

Then, Olivia's family discovered self-direction in IRIS through the TMG IRIS Consultant Agency.

Today, 24-year-old Olivia, an Elm Grove woman with autism, lives in her own apartment, works full-time in nutritional services at the local children's hospital and

manages her self-directed life with the help of her chosen supports.

"I truly believe that TMG and self-direction in IRIS were the saving grace for us," Judy told *The Path Ahead*. "If it wasn't for IRIS and Theresa, our TMG IRIS Consultant, we would have been trying to do this all on our own without the support we needed."

But to truly understand Olivia's recent accomplishments, you have to look beyond housing and employment.

She is a two-time Special Olympics Gold Medal winner, now preparing for the World Games in track and field. Olivia has emceed for the competition and frequently gives speeches for fundraisers and conferences. She is a brown belt in Tae Kwon Do. She goes to dinners and movies and paint classes with friends.

Olivia is also battling an advanced stage of cancer, which she and her family are determined to beat, so Olivia can get back to focusing on her next goals - advancement in her job and having her own home with a backyard for her dog.

"We've had the same TMG IRIS Consultant from the day we started," Judy said. "What's remarkable about Theresa is that she's worked very closely with Olivia on creative solutions. She's very tuned in to Olivia's skills and dreams and helps put together a path that works for her."

We look forward to hearing about Olivia's progress in her current fight, and wish her the best in the Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles!

What is Family Governed?

Family governed refers to a small group of like-minded families that join together to support their family members with a disability beyond forever. Families and the family member who uses support share similar hopes and goals for the best possible life. The family governed entity is generally focused to improve the long-term sustainability of a meaningful community life for their self-directing family member. This type of partnership among families has been successful around the world for individuals of all ages and all disabilities. The business structures of family governed organizations can be as unique as each family group. Typically, groups pool some fiscal resources to hire a coordinator whose role is to:

- **Create relationships.**
- **Coordinate hiring and supervising of staff.**
- **Manage daily connections with the community.**

The TMG ICA has been privileged to partner with two groups of families in building the first family governed groups in Wisconsin. That work involved partnership with families and Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. TMG ICA continues to participate in Self-Determination Innovation Grant projects that result in ongoing development and implementation of a guide to assist families in hiring and supporting direct support workers. This guide and support on its use is available through consult from TMG Community Partnership and Outreach staff or online at tmgwisconsin.com or WI-BPDD.org. For more information, please call TMG at (844) 864-8987 and ask for Patti Becker.

Kathryn's family (see page 2) is a part of Family Governed of Southeastern Waukesha County, Inc., the largest family governed group in the state.

Your goals are in
FRONT OF YOU.

IRIS is
BEHIND YOU.

And TMG is
BY YOUR SIDE.



Together, ***Let's Clear the Path Ahead.***

From the TMG Mailbag...

Q: Lately, I've been having problems with getting payments for my supports processed in a timely manner. What should I do?

A: Whenever you have a question or problem related to IRIS, the first step is always to contact your TMG IRIS Consultant. In some cases, your Consultant can identify an error in your IRIS plan or paperwork that may be causing problems.

If both of these are correct, the problem may be best addressed by iLIFE, the company that handles payments for your supports. Even though iLIFE is a separate company from your ICA, your TMG IRIS Consultant will do their best to help you navigate these issues so IRIS is a positive and hassle-free experience for you and your chosen workers.

After you've confirmed that your plan is correct with your TMG IRIS Consultant, contact iLIFE directly and explain your concern:

Toll-free: 1-888-800-5599 (Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

Email: IRIS@iLIFEfms.com

Stop in: There are iLIFE offices in Milwaukee, Appleton, Eau Claire, Rice Lake and Wausau. You can find addresses for these offices at www.iLIFEfinancialmanagement.com. Click on “Contact Us” in the upper right corner, then “Wisconsin IRIS” on the contact page.

If you feel like you've been unsuccessful, please let us know so your TMG IRIS Consultant can follow up on your behalf.



There are a number of organizations that support you in the IRIS program. To learn more about who does what, visit www.tmgwisconsin.com and click on “**Your IRIS Road Map**” at the bottom of the page. Or, ask your TMG IRIS Consultant for a printed copy of this information.



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