



Independence

Easterseals Wisconsin Newsletter
Winter/Spring 2021

HelpLine Marks 25 Years

"Loretta," says Jill Gretzinger, Coordinator of the Outagamie County Disability HelpLine, "is a bit of a mystery." No one knows why Loretta K. Ricker chose to leave a substantial amount of her estate to Easterseals Wisconsin (ESW). At the time of her death, her nephew noted that, to his knowledge, no members of their family had a disability and he knew of no prior relationship with Easterseals. The mystery of why Loretta chose Easterseals Wisconsin has never been solved, but in the 25 years since her bequest was received, thousands of people in the Fox Valley have benefited from her wonderful legacy.

When ESW was first notified of the bequest, which specifies that it benefit people in Outagamie County, we hired a consulting firm to do a needs survey of county service providers and families to determine how we could best be of help. It was decided a one-stop shop to get information and assistance about disability-related services would be a good use of the funds. Jill Gretzinger was then hired to develop the newly named Outagamie County Disability HelpLine. Over the years, HelpLine services have adapted as community needs and available government services have changed. "I like to think Loretta's gift has given us the flexibility to offer needed programs in gap areas," says Gretzinger.

Almost 8,000 individuals have called the HelpLine since the Appleton office was established in 1996. Outagamie County clients of our Camp and FARM programs have benefitted along with another 1200 clients who have received over \$300,000 in assistance to purchase disability-related equipment. A parents group, a car seat program, and other programs have added an additional 2,800 people who have benefitted locally from Ms. Ricker's gift.

Other programs over the years have included: a teen peer group, a social/recreation program and a collaborative music program for kids with autism, accessible parking education in the Valley, the Guardian Support Program, helping build a Universal Playground in Appleton, working with and serving as a fiscal agency for a local Lions group for the expansion of their loan closet and collaborating to get ramps to people who need them. The HelpLine has even collaborated on a local Wheelchair Wash!

Based on the way the bequest is set up, it will continue to be a gift for thousands of people in Outagamie County over the next 25 years, truly demonstrating how a legacy gift is one that keeps on giving, making the lives of thousands of people better.

***Congratulations to Jill & the HelpLine
on a job well done!***

***To learn more about Legacy Gifts, contact Rachel Reichhoff, Director
of Development, at rreichhoff@eastersealswisconsin.com***

