



# Independent Living Resources

# Empowerment

SPRING/SUMMER 2022

## May is Mental Health Awareness Month

As the world continues to find its way through the COVID pandemic, awareness of mental health struggles, challenges and treatment options is more vital than ever. The pandemic has created increased anxiety, isolation, trauma, and grief for large segments of the population; it is currently estimated that over 50 million Americans meet the criteria for having a mental illness and over half of those individuals are not receiving treatment for their symptoms. Please know that if you are currently having trouble with your mental health, you are not alone.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. For more than 15 years, Independent Living Resources has had a special focus on supporting the recovery of people experiencing mental illness and/or substance use through the utilization of peer specialists. In fact, ILR currently has 18 peer specialists on staff, approximately 70% of our total employees. A peer specialist is an individual who has personal, lived experience with a mental health or substance use disorder and is at a place in their recovery process that they are ready to give back by supporting others in their recovery journey. Peer specialists complete a specialized training that helps them to understand how to effectively support the recovery process of other individuals. Peer specialists specialize in providing support and hope to individuals in their recovery process, while helping the individual to try out a variety of coping strategies that they may find helpful. Peer specialists also believe that people are the experts in their own recovery journey.

If you are looking for help with finding support for your mental health, ILR staff are happy to help you explore options and local resources that might be able to help. ILR also coordinates RAVE Recovery Avenue, which is a recovery focused drop-in center in at 1806 State Street in La Crosse that is staffed by peer specialists. RAVE is open to any adult in the community who is looking for support in their recovery journey. If you would like more information on services provided through ILR or RAVE Recovery Avenue, please feel free to contact us at 608-787-1111; more information on hours and programming is also available at [www.ilresources.org](http://www.ilresources.org). (Please check the website for updated RAVE Recovery Avenue hours).

See Page 4 of this newsletter for a list of Mental Health Crisis Hotlines.

# Donation Closet

Independent Living Resources houses a donation closet of gently used, certified-safe assistive devices and durable medical equipment. Individuals and organizations in the community can donate items to us and we then help redistribute those items back into the community for those in need.

This service and program are completely free and available to all.

## Examples of items we accept:

**Mobility Aids-** Standard Wheelchairs, Electric Wheelchairs/ Scooters, Knee Scooters, Standard Walkers, 4-wheeled/seated Walkers, Hemi-walker, Crutches, Canes

**Fall Reduction Aids** - Grab Bars, Bed Handles/ Support Bars, Floor to ceiling support poles

**Dressing Devices-** Sock Aids, Dressing Sticks, Shoe Horn, Leg Lifter

**Bathing Devices-** (New Only) Long-handled Sponge, Shower Chair/ Transfer Bench, Adjustable Shower Head Systems

**Hearing/ Vision Assistive Devices**

Please call ILR at 608-787-1111 to donate or inquire about items we currently have available!

# MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS FAIR

JOIN US

For an information and resource fair with interactive booths, activities, and raffle to promote Mental Health Awareness Month!

When: Thursday, May 26th 1pm-5pm

Where: The Reach Center

212 11th St S, La Crosse, WI 54601

 **INDEPENDENT  
LIVING  
RESOURCES, INC.**

eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**  
La Crosse

# Staff Spotlight



Independent Living Resources would like to recognize Independent Living Specialist and Homeless Outreach team member, Kish Hudson. Kish recently received three community awards in recognition of her work with the Southside Mom's Group and the Enduring Families Project as well as receiving The Black Excellence Community Helper Award. These honors are well-deserved and indicative of her commitment to her work and her community. We are thankful to have her as part of the Independent Living Resources team!

## COVID-19 Support

### **ILR can assist with COVID-19 Vaccination Navigation**

If you are looking to get vaccinated for COVID-19 and are in need of assistance navigating the process in your area you can reach out to ILR at 608-787-1111, or email [advocacy@ilresources.org](mailto:advocacy@ilresources.org) to be connected with a staff member who can support you. You can also find information about the health departments in our service region on our website: [www.ilresources.org](http://www.ilresources.org)

# Join the ILR Board

**ILR is seeking board members who can help lead our agency promoting: consumer control, inclusion, diversity, and equality in all aspects of society.**

ILR's Board of Directors must be made up of at least 51% of people who have lived experience with a disability. Board members must live or work in our service region comprised of 13 counties (Buffalo, Trempealeau, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Juneau, Vernon, Richland, Sauk, Crawford, Grant, Iowa, and Lafayette)

- ILR has switched to virtual meetings so no travel is necessary
- Applications can be completed online or in paper format
- Interviews with recruitment committee are virtual
- Board orientation is virtual
- Meetings are currently 6-7 times per year on the last Monday of every other month

**Please call Sara Eckland at 608-787-1111 to learn more.**



# Mental Health Crisis Hotlines

-National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

-Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 press 1/ Or Text 838255

-Text Hopeline: Text "Hope" to 741741

-Farmer Wellness Helpline 888-901-2558

-Trans Lifeline 877-565-8860

-Trevor Lifeline (LGBTQIA+ Lifeline): 866-488-7386/ or Text "Start" to 678-678

# Recovery Avenue



Recovery Avenue (RAVE) has begun the process of being open to in-person services! We began opening the doors back up in March on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 am- 2:00 pm. We are excited to announce that starting April 11<sup>th</sup> we will be open from 9:00 am- 3:00 pm Monday through Friday! With these new hours we are also welcoming a new staff member, Paul. Paul is a certified peer specialist as well as a guitar instructor. We look forward to having a new friendly face along with some entertainment from the guitar! In addition to expanded hours, we are looking forward to bringing back meals, activities, and support groups soon!

RAVE also picked up a few new items while we were providing virtual services. We now have a Nintendo Switch, a brand-new popcorn machine, all new art supplies including paints, colored pencils, canvases, drafting tables to create on, and much more!

Recovery Avenue staff took a tour of the La Crosse area's new peer run respite center, The Lighthouse. It was a great opportunity to meet with other peer specialist in the community and receive information on their services to share with individuals who visit RAVE as well as share Recovery Avenue services with their staff. Follow Recovery Avenue on Facebook to keep up with what we are offering as we open back up to face-to-face services.



# Peer Recovery Conference



## **2022 Wisconsin Peer Recovery Conference**

**August 18 & 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at the Marriott West  
Madison, Wisconsin**

**Special Peer-Centered Pre-Conference Ethics &  
Boundaries Training offered on August 17<sup>th</sup>**

Please join us for what is sure to be an exciting and engaging peer conference. This conference is open to all those working as a peer specialist, recovery coach, supervisor, or person living in recovery from mental health and/or substance use.

Registration and scholarship applications will open by May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. Please check the conference website to stay up to date on conference happenings. If you would like to have a vendor booth or have any questions about the conference, please contact Nicole Ravens at [nicole.ravens@ilresources.org](mailto:nicole.ravens@ilresources.org)

# Peer Recovery Conference

## 2022 PRC Keynote Speakers

- **Cassie Walker** - Cassie is a Black Queer Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Therapist, Activist, Writer, and Gamer. They are a former Certified Recovery Support Specialist and person living with Complex Trauma and Bipolar Disorder. They present a diverse array of intersectional topics related to race, gender, sexuality, BDSM and Kink, mental health, liberation, and decolonization. Cassie is the founder and owner of Intersections Center for Complex Healing PLLC and host of the Woke Mental Wellness Podcast.
- **Kyle Brewer, BS, PRPS** - Kyle is the Peer Specialist Program Manager for NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals. He works for NAADAC remotely from Little Rock, AR, managing the Arkansas Peer Specialist Program. He has used his lived experience with drug and alcohol addiction to become a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist, and became the first Peer Recovery Specialist in Arkansas to be stationed in an emergency room department.
- **Jimmy McGill** - Jimmy is the State's Recovery Manager for the Arkansas Drug Director's office, and he is a Certified Peer Recovery Peer Supervisor (PRPS). His lived experience has allowed him the chance to lead the development of the Peer Recovery Infrastructure throughout Arkansas. He has assisted in the training of over 330 Peer Recovery Specialists. Jimmy was the founding member of both the Arkansas Peers Advisory Committee (APAC) and the Arkansas Peers Achieving Recovery Together (A.P.A.R.T) coalition and is the current chair for the SAMHSA Region 6 Peer Support Advisory Committee.

## Upcoming Awareness Events

### MAY

- ALS Awareness Month
- National Interpreter Appreciation Day (First Wednesday in May)
- National Fibromyalgia Awareness Day (May 12th)

### JUNE

- LGBTQIA Pride Month
- Community Health Improvement Week (First full week in June)
- Autistic Pride Day (June 18th)

### JULY

- National Fragile X Awareness Month
- National Hire a Veteran Day (July 25th)
- National Disability Independence Day (July 26th)



# Richland Center Office



Independent Living Resources satellite office located in Richland Center is excited to welcome Melissa Touche. Melissa is an Independent Living Specialist and Certified Peer and Parent Peer Specialist. She has a Bachelor of Science in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies from the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse. She also has an Associate of Science in Environmental Science from a tribal college in North Dakota. She brings with her a wealth of experience in navigating systems and overcoming barriers. Melissa strives to assist and support her community in any matter as she is able.

Both Nikki and Melissa are busy providing services to eight southwestern counties in Wisconsin including Vernon, Richland, Crawford, Grant, Iowa, Lafayette, Sauk and Juneau counties. They are providing all of ILR's five core services including information and referral, independent living skills training, individual and systems advocacy, peer support, and transition services. They also receive regular inquiries for assistive technology loans, demonstration, and training through our partnership with Wistech.

They recently worked with Spring Green High School where they facilitated a youth Skills Training Class. Students had the opportunity to participate in six classes that focused on job attainment skills including; communication, attitude, networking, problem solving, teamwork, and professionalism. They had a lot of fun getting to know these amazing students and to once again be back in the classroom.

Nikki and Melissa also continue to work with the County Communities on Transition (CCoT) in Richland County. The Richland County group will be providing a parent/student educational opportunity that will provide an overview of a wide range of excellent community resources for students with disabilities who are transitioning out of high school.





Assistive Technology (AT) is any product or device that enables people with disabilities to improve their independence and quality of life in the community, at home, at work or at school. Assistive Technology can include, but is not limited to: I-Pads, ergonomic writing utensils, amplified cellphones, computer equipment such as keyboards, monitors, software, screen readers and ergonomic office equipment and furniture. There is truly a piece of AT to fit any of your needs!

ILR also has a Device Loan & Demonstration Program with over 400 Assistive Technology devices that can be loaned out and/or demonstrated by an Independent Living Specialist.

If you are interested in receiving more information on this program, or would like to have a demonstration, please contact ILR at 608-787-1111.

For a full list of ILR's inventory of Assistive Technology please visit:  
[www.wisconsinat4all.com](http://www.wisconsinat4all.com)

## **Wisconsin Telework and WisLoan Programs**

### **Telework**

The Wisconsin Telework Program is a statewide alternative loan program that allows residents with disabilities to purchase computers and other equipment needed to work from home or from other remote sites away from the office, such as work on the road or at a telework center. Telework Loan funds can be used to purchase office equipment such as furniture, computers, printers, software, telecommunication devices and other office machines. Home modifications can also be paid for through the loan to create an accessible home office.

### **Wisloan**

The Wisconsin Wisloan Program is a statewide alternative loan program that allows residents with disabilities to purchase assistive technology and/or make home modifications that help a person with a disability live more independently and productively. Examples of Assistive Technology that would be approved through the program would be wheelchairs and motorized scooters, hearing aids, visual aids and magnifiers, computers with modifications, controls or switches and vehicle modifications.



## What is the Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program?

TEPP helps people with disabilities buy equipment they need in order to use basic telephone services. 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. 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.



### 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.



### **How much do I have to pay?**

You pay the first \$100 (except for Hard of Hearing vouchers). The voucher pays the rest, up to the maximum voucher amount. If you buy equipment that costs more than the voucher plus your \$100, you also pay the extra charges.

### **What if I can't afford the \$100?**

The Telecommunication Assistance Program (TAP) may be able to pay the \$100. TAP is a program of the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. TAP is only for persons who are deaf or severely hard of hearing in a low income household. TAP funds pay the \$100 TEPP co-payment, if you qualify.



If you are interested in the TEPP or TAP program, contact ILR today to begin the process and receive a demonstration of eligible equipment for the TEPP Voucher!

## Independent Living Resources Core Services:

**Information & Referral:** ILR provides information about disability-related resources and services to people with disabilities, families, professionals and the general public. Staff are available to listen and assist with locating resources and developing strategies for individuals to resolve barriers such as: housing issues, transportation, employment, accessibility, discrimination and legal rights, adaptive equipment, and community supports and services. The Information & Referral process is the gateway into other services at ILR.

**Independent Living Skills Training:** Independent Living Staff provides one-on-one skills training to overcome individualized disability-related barriers. Acquired skills include any life skill needed to become or remain independent. Skills training can be provided in the community, at home, and/or in the best possible setting for meeting the goals of the individual with a disability.

**Individual & Systems Advocacy:** ILR works with individuals with disabilities to provide support and guidance related to individual and systems advocacy. Self advocacy is about having the personal confidence to dictate individualized needs and wants. Systems Advocacy is looking at impacts that can be made at a local, state or national level. Independent Living Specialists can teach self-advocacy skills and help individuals develop strong advocacy skills so that they are able to make individual or system-wide impacts.

**Peer Support:** Peer Support is working with someone who has already been through a similar path as you and is willing to help guide you through the resources and support needed to accomplish your goals. Peer support is really the philosophy of “someone who has ‘been there, done that - let me offer guidance and support. ” ILR offers peer support in a number of different ways: through day-to-day interactions with staff who have disabilities themselves, or through a Certified Peer Support Specialist.

**Transition Services:** ILR will facilitate the transitions of individuals with disabilities from nursing homes to home or community based living, provide assistance to those at risk of entering institutions so they may remain in the community, or facilitate the transition from school to post-secondary life, including work.

**Additional Services:** ILR also provides Benefits Counseling and Employment Services (SSI and SSDI), Assistive Technology assessments and training, Public Education, Mental Health First Aid, Soft Skills Training, Housing/Homelessness assistance, Home Modification assessments, and Home Safety assessments.



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## **ILR Board of Directors**

Michael Sersch: President

Marilyn Martin: Vice President

Janine Garvin: Treasurer/Secretary

John Davis

Lucas Herro

Amy Dummer

Vincent Loera

Looking for board members now.

See pg. 4 for more info.

**For your convenience, this newsletter is available in audio tape, braille, large print, e-mail, computer disc format, or on our website in text version. Let us know your particular format needs and we will make a copy for you accordingly.**