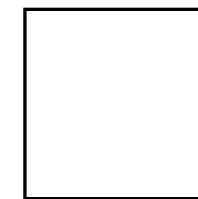




1 S PINCKNEY ST STE 320
MADISON WI 53703-2887

Return Service Requested



IRIS is grounded in the five basic principles of self-determination that ensure you have control of your life and are a valued citizen in society:

1. Freedom to decide how you want to live your life.
2. Authority over a specific budget amount.
3. Support to organize resources in ways that are meaningful to you.
4. Responsibility for your wise use of public dollars.
5. Confirmation of your important leadership as an advocate.



Winter 2013 IRIS Connections



Working on a Dream

IRIS knows work is an important part of life. It gives us a sense of purpose and helps shape who we are. When we work, we have better health and a stronger sense of belonging, purpose, and self-worth. For many people, employment helps them stay involved in their communities. In this issue of *IRIS Connections*, you will meet two IRIS Participants who share their talents with others through the work they do.

The 2013 IRIS Employment Initiative goal is to double the number of IRIS Participants working in integrated employment. The IRIS program can help you get started with employment; whether that means finding your first job, moving to a different job, or setting up your own business. You can contact your IRIS Consultant for more information.

Questions About Employment?

If you have questions and want to learn more about finding a job or starting a business, contact your IRIS Consultant or the IRIS Information Center by phone at 1-888-515-4747 or email info@Wisconsin-IRIS.com.

Employment Services and Providers

The Department of Health Services and the IRIS program promote and support employment opportunities for all IRIS Participants.

You can use community resources, along with your IRIS funds, to find a job. You may choose to use employment services from a provider or hire a worker to help you. Talk with your IRIS Consultant if you want to learn more about finding or keeping a job.

Your IRIS funds may be used to help you:

- set a job goal and explore job options;
- decide what supports and services you need to get and keep a job;
- find a job or plan a business;
- understand how work can affect your benefits; and
- get support while working your job.

Let's Get to Work

The Let's Get to Work project focuses on helping youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities find employment in their communities. The project involves youth; families; teachers; employment experts; and people who can help shape employment policy for the future.

To learn more about the Let's Get to Work project, visit the website at <http://bit.ly/TXdhHL> or contact the project coordinator at 608-261-7528.

IRIS Participants on Employment



Upcoming Events

02/20–02/22
Wisconsin Transition Conference
Kalahari Resort
Wisconsin Dells, WI

03/21
4th Annual Youth Transition Conference
University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire
Eau Claire, WI

For more information visit:
<http://www.Wisconsin-IRIS.com/events>

Ralph Barten

Ralph Barten is an avid outdoorsman living in Ladysmith with his wife, Jo. More than eleven years ago, he lost his eyesight due to unforeseen circumstances during a lower back operation. Though his life has changed, he feels being inactive and “sitting all day” is the worst thing he can do.

Drawing inspiration from his love of the outdoors, Ralph had an idea to sell the items he creates from deer antlers and diamond willow branches. To get started, he talked with the Wisconsin’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), which helped him get his first tools and connected him with someone who taught him a few techniques.

Before long, Ralph began making antler piece necklaces and lamps. He founded his business, “Ralph’s Rack Shack”, to sell the items that he makes, such as hat racks, cup holders, shelves, and walking sticks. The IRIS funds in his plan help offset the costs of his travel to places where he distributes his products and the tools he needs for his work.

This hunter’s greatest happiness comes from giving back to others. While he makes plenty of antler zipper-pulls to sell, he also gives away many thousands to terminally-ill children through “Shed of Hope”, a non-profit organization he started a few years ago.

Ralph likes how his work keeps his mind going and keeps him occupied. “It helps you mentally and physically,” Ralph says with a smile. “As long as I can make a few dollars and keep going, I’ll be happy.”



Kelly Alber

Kelly Alber is an artist living in Tomahawk with her dad, mom, and sister. She has a passion for creating many kinds of art, but especially likes painting.

After Kelly graduated from high school, her parents felt that she had much to offer. Drawing on her talents, the three of them worked together to find a way to share her art with the community at large. Kelly’s dad, Jim, helped his daughter get started by finding a company that could transfer her pictures into a format they could reproduce onto other objects. After first featuring her art on t-shirts and coffee mugs, she eventually decided to sell greeting cards, which are now sold at several shops in the Minocqua area.

Kelly and her family like how the IRIS program supports and encourages her to be involved and active. Creating and selling art helps her make connections and shows the valued role Kelly has within her community.



Out With the Old, In With the New!

Now that 2013 is here, it is a good time to make sure that you are using the most up-to-date IRIS forms.

All available forms for IRIS Participants and guardians are available on the IRIS website on the “Handbooks and Forms” page. New and updated forms are added to the IRIS website as soon as they become available.

Can’t find the form you are looking for? Contact your IRIS Consultant or the IRIS Information Center by phone at 1-888-515-4747 or send an email to info@Wisconsin-IRIS.com.



Employment Resources

The United States Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) focuses on national policies to ensure people with disabilities are fully integrated into the workforce. The ODEP website (<http://www.dol.gov/odep>) has helpful information and tools for people with disabilities who are pursuing employment or self-employment.

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is an important resource for people with disabilities who are seeking employment or self-employment. The DVR provides funding for employment related services and supports. Visit the DVR online at <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr>.

The Transition Action Guide is one of the most helpful resources in the school-to-work transition process. Full version: <http://www.wsti.org/documents/topics/d/tag.pdf>; Short version: http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf_files/tag_short_version.pdf.

The IRIS Integrated Employment Group is a place where you can learn more about available employment opportunities, meet employment experts, and network with others who are interested in employment. Visit the IRIS Integrated Employment Group at <http://www.wisconsin-iris.com/group/iris-employment-cohort>.

The IRIS Employment Toolkit contains helpful information, worksheets, and resources for anyone who would like to learn more about employment. Toolkits are available from your IRIS Consultant or by contacting the IRIS Information Center by phone at 1-888-515-4747 or by email at info@Wisconsin-IRIS.com.