



THE
PATH
AHEAD

Fall 2015 Newsletter



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TMG Wisconsin is now on **Facebook** and **Twitter**, and we'd like to connect with you!

Find us by searching for "TMG Wisconsin" on both sites and start following our news feeds.

We'll keep you up-to-date on long-term care news, events and insights affecting our communities. We will also connect you to resources and expertise provided by other people and organizations from Wisconsin, the United States and beyond. Do you know of a Facebook page or Twitter account that you think we should follow? Feel free to suggest it!

We look forward to connecting with you and sharing information and ideas!

To ensure and protect personal privacy, please remember to not post any personal health information on any TMG or other social media pages.

Upcoming Events of Interest

→ **FEBRUARY 18-19, 2016**
Wisconsin Transition Conference
Wisconsin Dells, WI

→ **MARCH 15, 2016**
Disability Advocacy Day
Madison Capitol - Madison, WI
For up-to-date information visit: survivalcoalitionwi.org

Andy Thain



Andy Thain, entrepreneur and CEO of AT Home Care, LLC, works hard each and every day to ensure his customers receive the care and supports they need to lead a fulfilling life.

Living with his own disability has allowed him to understand the inner workings of using home care and the importance of reliable supports.

As a college student at Marquette University, Andy struggled to find supports that met his needs. “I was an 18-year-old trying to figure out how to survive in Milwaukee. Finding needed personal support was complicated and there were days that it just didn’t work.”

It was not long before Andy took control of coordinating his own care to ensure he had the help he needed, when he needed it.

He hired and trained his own caregivers, managed their schedules and handled payroll. As Andy puts it, “I was living out the IRIS model of self-directed employer authority before IRIS was in existence.”

After earning his Business Administration degree from Marquette, Andy struggled to find traditional employment. “I quickly realized that for someone with a disability, there were additional complications.” That’s when Andy decided to create a job that worked for him. In 2010, Andy and his mother, a nurse, founded AT Home Care.

Almost five years later, Andy is back in his hometown of Thorp, Wisconsin managing a staff of 130, providing care to nearly 100 people in North Central Wisconsin.

With the support of the TMG ICA and IRIS, Andy is able to arrange his supports to get to and from work each day. Andy’s TMG IRIS Consultant, Tina, helps Andy self-direct the tasks related to his IRIS plan so that he can focus on his business and personal goals.

Andy describes his relationship with Tina as a partnership. “We can write up goals and think about how to use my budget. We break it down and prioritize it together.” Tina brings diverse expertise about braiding community supports and IRIS funds to meet his personal goals.

It’s that partnership that helps Andy continue his busy life as a CEO in the long-term care industry. “IRIS has dramatically simplified the process for me,” said Andy. “I’m able to go to work and run my business, and there are a lot of people counting on that each and every day.”

Princess Brown



Princess Brown began caring for others as a nursing assistant at age 17. It was a career she continued throughout her life, up until 1999 when she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis.

Six years ago, it became difficult for Princess to manage day-to-day tasks on her own so she enrolled in the IRIS Program and began working with her TMG IRIS Consultant to develop a long-term care plan.

Family is one of the most important things to Princess. She spent 12 years caring for her mother. Through self-directing with IRIS, her children are able to do the same and Princess is able to receive care from someone she trusts instead of a stranger. “In other programs you don’t have a choice who you work with. In IRIS you do.”

Caring for her mother taught Princess a great deal about at-home care. “I learned a lot from taking care of my mother; it helped me to know how to help myself.”

That knowledge has allowed Princess and her TMG IRIS Consultant, Alice, to set up her home so that it’s safe for Princess to move about without the fear of falling. Because of that, she’s able to stay in her home in Milwaukee, instead of moving into a nursing home.

“It’s important to me to stay at home. That’s why I keep trying to do the best I can; I keep going.” Staying in her home and receiving care from her children means spending more time with her grandchildren. “I’ve got three grandchildren, one girl and two boys – they’re all doing great in school and I’m so proud of them.”

When Princess isn’t spending time with her grandchildren, socializing with neighbors, working on puzzles or taking walks around her apartment complex, she enjoys making things with her hands.

Princess dreams of one day making pottery and things she could give to her grandchildren. It’s a goal she’s shared with her TMG IRIS Consultant; “I talk with my TMG IRIS Consultant often. I enjoy talking with Alice and I appreciate her very much.”

Without the support of Alice and the care from her children, Princess says she’s not sure she could manage it. “IRIS is a beautiful program, and my family, well, they keep me going.”

Liz Siefert



Liz leads an active life as a student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where she studies photography. When she's not in class, she spends her time swimming, playing with her nephew and riding and caring for her horse, Julian. Liz has worked hard for this active life.

At age 16, Liz was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia. "I tried chemotherapy at first and it worked, but then the cancer came back strong," said Liz. Her next option was a bone marrow transplant.

Although the bone marrow transplant left Liz cancer-free, it took a toll on her body. While under anesthesia for a routine procedure, Liz suffered a heart attack. The experience left her with an anoxic brain injury.

"It takes a long time to recover from that," said Liz's mother, Linda. "It's what she suffers from the most and it's what drives her need for supports." Her injury made many of the things she used to love doing a near impossibility.

Liz found answers to challenges through TMG and the IRIS Program. "Liz can make decisions about a lot of things," Linda said. "She just needs support." Liz continues to share a home with her parents and uses their natural supports to meet her day-to-day needs, like transportation, home chores and meal preparation. She then has flexibility to direct her IRIS funds toward supports that help achieve her physical health and educational goals.

One of Liz's first goals was to use a portion of her IRIS budget to hire a physical therapist who could help her relearn to swim. Regular exercise is important for Liz to build and maintain her strength to attend school and meet her daily goals.

With the help of her physical therapist, Ashley, Liz was able to realize that dream of swimming again during a family trip this past June. "I was able to go in the ocean and jump in the waves," Liz remembers. "It felt so good. It was my number one goal."

Like many people who experience an injury early in life, Liz's vision of what life could be was shaken. Through self-direction and being empowered to see possibilities, she's been able to pursue those opportunities she once thought were lost. One of those opportunities was earning a college degree.

With the support of Liz's TMG IRIS Consultant, Sarah, Liz has been able to work towards her goal at UW-Milwaukee. "I'm now planning to use my funds to pay for a classroom aide," Liz said. The photography lab classes she takes require her to handle heavy equipment and use chemicals in a darkroom. These types of tasks are physically difficult for Liz. "Her hope is that IRIS could help fund an aide who could help her with that," said Linda. Sarah and Liz are now working together to get a short-term budget revision that could help make that happen.

When asked about her future plans, Liz said, "My goal is to get my degree. Right now, I'm a junior, so I'm getting close."

After graduation, Liz plans to combine her two passions and start her own business photographing horse shows. Anyone who has met Liz knows it's a dream she will make a reality.

Liz persists with a positive attitude and big dreams. Her mother said, "She's a battler. Her motto has always been, 'I just have to move forward.'"

Share Your Story



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**” at the bottom of the homepage. You might be featured in an upcoming issue of *The Path Ahead!*



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...

Did you know that you and your IRIS Consultant are supported by over 500 TMG health and human services professionals located throughout Wisconsin? Each of us is 100% committed to making your IRIS experience the best that it can be.

TMG is the only IRIS Consultant Agency with a local community presence everywhere IRIS is available. In total, **we serve over 12,500 of our neighbors in every corner of the state.**

We know that as you self-direct your supports in IRIS, you will need a partner to provide assistance with creating an action plan or finding community resources. In addition to your IRIS Consultant, who's always available to partner with you, the entire TMG team stands ready to help you in every way possible.

We are here for you. If you need us, please contact your IRIS Consultant first, or feel free to contact the TMG team at:

→ **IRISinfo@tmgwisconsin.com**

→ **1-844-864-8987**

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

Your goals are in front of you, IRIS is behind you and TMG is by your side.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services is working on a new model that will integrate long-term care with physical and behavioral health care. TMG developed a *Concept Paper on the Future of Self-Direction in Wisconsin's Long Term Care System* to help inform their work.

As our paper indicates, we see integrated care as an opportunity to leverage the value of self-direction with the benefits of health care coordination to create a better experience for the person and a more sustainable long-term care system for the state. We look forward to working with the Department, the Legislature and stakeholders in the self-direction community to ensure self-direction continues as a fundamental component of Wisconsin's long-term care system.

To view the TMG concept paper, visit **www.tmgwisconsin.com** and click on "2015-2017 Wisconsin State Budget" under "Resources" in the navigation menu. Please feel free to share the information with others you think might be interested!



one south pinckney street, suite 320
madison, wisconsin 53703
(844) 864-8987
IRISinfo@tmgwisconsin.com
tmgwisconsin.com

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meaningful lives in their communities.™**

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