

SibNews

News for and about siblings of people with disabilities
Nov/Dec 2019—Jan 2020

**Sibshops and
Sib Camps
coming in
2020**

Sibling's Choice

Siblings talk about the value of caregivers.
Cover photo: Annabelle Busch (right) with her Sibling's Choice caregiver, Andrene Busch.

Like Your Life?

Thank a sister.

We Celebrate Caregivers

A Sibling Super Power

By Kathy Walsh Nufer, writer and WisconSibs volunteer

Siblings share a super power for detecting how well caregivers treat and care for their brother or sister with special needs.

A pair of siblings recognized two of those people with the Sibling's Choice -Family Caregiver Award at the WisconSibs 2019 Celebrate Sisterhood benefit held Oct. 22. Honoring these caregivers highlighted the ways in which others step in to provide families with much needed support and respite.

Difference Makers

Anika Lisowe, 9, likes to read to her brother Wyatt. They watch Disney videos, build forts and play games together. "I let him ride my hover board, too," Anika said, adding, "I worry about Wyatt sometimes."

The two are close, but Anika welcomes visits from Sara Wiperman, who is a big part of her family's life. Sara met the Lisowes eight years ago as a paraprofessional tasked with driving Wyatt to and



Anika Lisowe (left) nominated Sara Wiperman to receive a 2019 Sibling's Choice Award. This is the 11th year for the award presentation held during the annual Celebrate Sisterhood luncheon every October.

from New Holstein Elementary School. Today she also handles Wyatt's autism assistance service dog Chrome and is on standby for everything from homework help to outings.

Anika said she nominated Sara for the Sibling's Choice award, "Because she helps us a lot. Sometimes she helps Wyatt with his homework, helps him relax with Chrome, and sometimes we all go to the store together. It's a lot of fun."

Tracy Lisowe, Anika's mother, sees how important Sara is to all three of her children's wellbeing. Sibs of brothers and sister with

"I feel like I need to be there for his siblings, too, because they are such a huge part of his success."

disabilities have a special bond and it needs nurturing, Tracy said. "They're either a caregiver or resentful, and Anika really cares about Wyatt. They're buddies. She likes helping Wyatt but she's going to have to live her life, too. That's why we have Chrome as Wyatt's buddy and Sara who is such a huge part of our lives."

Sara's reward is seeing Wyatt progress from non-speaking to carrying on great conversations, and watching Anika and their brother Jack blossom as well.

"Siblings are amazing but they have their days, too. Some days they don't understand if Wyatt is doing something because of his autism or because he's a 12-year-old boy. I feel

like I need to be there for his siblings, too, because they are such a huge part of his success."



Annabelle Busch (center) with her mother and her Aunt Andrene. Annabelle nominated Andrene for a 2019 Sibling's Choice Family Caregiver Award.

Natural Supports

Annabelle Busch, 13, a Shattuck Middle School eighth grader, likes to listen to music and dance with her sister Catherine, 16. "We generally just hang out," she said. "I have ballet daily but I always find time for her. She's really not a bother, but sometimes I could use time of my own. The bonds we've had are lifelong because of our experiences, but Catherine has her life too."

Annabelle nominated her aunt Andrene Busch for the award. "It is important to recognize people who care about your sibling," she said. "My aunt has a special relationship with my sister. She's really a good person that deserves this for all the time and effort she puts into Catherine."

Providing respite is never a burden, said Andrene. "Catherine brings all of us joy. Catherine has a very special place in my heart. We don't see her as a person with a disability."

She observed that Annabelle is the "younger child but plays the role of the oldest child. She will always play that role. She takes it seriously."

Andrene sees her role as enriching the lives of both girls and providing a

(Continued from page 2)

natural support for Catherine and Annabelle's relationship. I love them like they're my own children."

Both Anika and Annabelle have attended WisconSibs activities, which include summer camps, Sibshops and programs that explore the challenges and joys of the "sibling experience" and teach coping skills to last a lifetime.

"It has definitely filled a need for Annabelle," said her mom Nina Busch. "She has made good connections with other sibs. It's also a really good resource I've started to tap into more."

"I like to meet new friends with brothers and sister like Wyatt," said Anika. Her brother Jack has also made friends that "get what it's like" to have a sibling with a disability.

"Rare Gem"

Amanda Owen, whose Kentucky nonprofit serves individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families, wishes she had a WisconSibs when she was growing up with her brother with special needs. In her remarks at Celebrate Sisterhood, she said "You have a rare gem at your backdoor". "A sibling might not be able to express what the reason is for this organization, but it's definitely having an impact on sibs, the community and the workforce."



We don't need to do this journey alone."



Pictured above: **Marc Quaintance and Todd Klauer** and the staff of Todd Steven & Associates, Menasha.

Siblings could also nominate Professional Caregivers. Christiana Yablonowski nominated Todd Steven & Associates. She stated, "I am so grateful for the peace of mind Todd Steven & Associates gave us all and how they always seem to be coming up with new ideas for how to integrate him into his community even further."

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Like Your Life? Thank a Sister



Sibling research suggests that a great predictor of how someone treats their siblings is how they treat their friends. These friends may not be blood sisters but chose to celebrate sisterhood together and support WisconSibs programs by participating in Celebrate Sisterhood.

If you have a sister, you may be mentally healthier and enjoy greater self-esteem than someone who doesn't.

That's the conclusion of a 2010 study published in The Journal of Family Psychology examining 400 families with multiple siblings (one of whom was between the ages of 10-14) revealed that having a sister promoted positive mental health in their siblings.

But is that so surprising? In my presentations to parents, I review the many roles siblings play...first friends, coaches, social skill role models, teachers, antagonists, etc. When there is a child with disabilities, their siblings also take expanded roles as therapists, caregivers, advocates, and interpreters.

Studies show that you may have a lot of reasons to thank your sister, including:

- **A sister gives you a mental health boost.** Sisters help protect their siblings from "feeling lonely, unloved, guilty, self-conscious and fearful." As adults, they often help keep families in contact with one another after the parents pass.
- **A sister can help you be a kinder, more giving person.** That's because sisters are promoting positive

compassion and altruism in a stronger way than even parents.

- **A sister helps your interpersonal AND communication skills.**

Research has found that brothers who grew up with sisters are better at communicating with women than those who were only children or only have brothers

- **A sister teaches you how to achieve balance.** A 2009 survey, which included participants ages 17 to 25, found that sisters can help their siblings cope with issues in their life and experience less stress. In turn, they were happier and more optimistic than their counterparts.

Why exactly do sisters — not brothers — help you achieve balance, though?

Researchers conclude that women tend to open up channels of communication and are much more expressive, fundamental to good psychological health, and sisters promotes this in families.

Over the holidays, take a moment to thank your sisters...and your brothers. Write a note, send a card, draw a picture...say "thanks for making me better."

Seeds Planted

By Stephenie Mlodzik
Fund Development Coordinator
Stephenie@wisconsibs.org



Celebrate Sisterhood guest speaker, Amanda Owen acknowledged the impact WisconSibs is having on siblings, the community, and the work-

force saying, "This organization plants the seed to establish relationships, and those connections grow into something that has great impact."

While our impact is undeniable, much like the siblings we serve, we don't make this journey alone. The seeds we plant are supported by funding from our community partners. We wholeheartedly thank the sponsors that made this year's Celebrate Sisterhood possible.

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Thank you for seeing our organization as the "rare gem" that it is. Your generosity enables WisconSibs to continue serving siblings of people with disabilities throughout Wisconsin.

"Do what you can with all you have, wherever you are." --

Theodore Roosevelt



Thank You Pumpkin Cake

Recipe tucked inside each Celebrate Sisterhood guest's favor

6 tablespoons yellow cake mix
2 tablespoons pumpkin puree
2 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice

Spray an 8 oz mason jar with non-stick cooking spray. Add all the ingredients and mix with a fork. Cook 1 minute in microwave. Carefully remove hot jar from microwave. Serve with ice cream and caramel sauce.

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*Wisconsin Department of Health Services Options Scorecard data
for IRIS Consultant Agencies, July 2019

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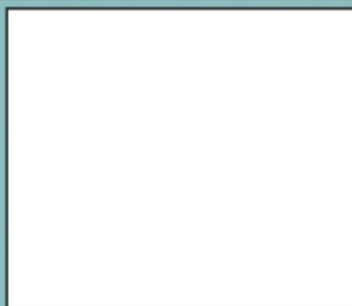
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Calendar of Events

MORE INFO OR TO REGISTER, VISIT
WISCONSIBS.ORG OR
CALL 920-968-1742

Sibshops



**Winter/Spring 2020
 Information and Schedule**

For kids ages 6-12 growing up with
 sisters and brothers with
 disabilities or long-term illnesses.



Sibshops For Young Sibs & Teen Sib Leaders*

Dec 14 10 am — 1:30 pm

Celebration School
 3100 E Evergreen Dr. Appleton
 Sibshop holiday fun for ages 6-12
 who have siblings with disabilities.
 Special demonstration of
 Augmentative Assistive
 Communication Technology. Sibshop
 includes lunch and snack.

Jan 11 9 am — noon

YMCA
 110 E North Water St., Neenah, WI
 Lots of activity and fun for sibs at the Y.

Feb 15 9 am — noon

H.U.L.K. Sibshop for boys/dads
Fox Valley Lutheran High School
 5300 N Meade St, Appleton, WI
 Chemistry teacher and Sib, Ben Stern,
 puts us through fun experiments,
 competitions, and discussions with boys
 (ages 6 and older) and dads, uncles,
 grandfathers, or other male involved in
 their lives.

Feb 15 1 pm — 4 pm

S.P.A. Sibshop for girls/moms
Fox Valley Lutheran High School
 5300 N Meade St, Appleton, WI
 Same as HULK Sibshop, but it's the girls/
 moms' / aunts', grandmothers' turn.

Mar 14 1 pm — 4 pm

NEW Zoo, Green Bay
 4378 Reforestation Rd, Green Bay
 Sibs love animals and this Sibshop
 will offer them a up-close experience
 with some of the most fascinating
 animals living at the Zoo.

TO REQUEST A BROCHURE WITH
 INFORMATION AND COMPLETE
 SCHEDULE OF 2019-2020 SIBSHOPS,
 EMAIL US AT INFO@WISCONSIBS.ORG
 *Teen Sib Leaders should contact the
 WisconSibs office to volunteer.

For Adults

Dec 6 5:30 pm—7:30 pm

**Adult WisconSib Holiday
 Social**

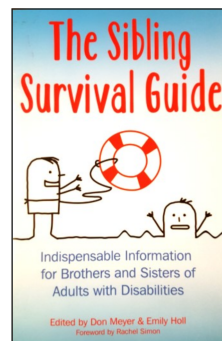
The Grand Meridian
 2621 N. Oneida, Appleton

A fun evening of good food, good music
 and good friends. Free event.
 RESERVATIONS REQUIRED. Contact the
 WisconSibs office.

Jan 16 5:30 pm—7:30 pm

Sibling Survival Group
Pizza King
 801 W Wisconsin Ave, Appleton

Join attorney
 Kristine Williams
 and adult
 WisconSibs to learn
 tips about future
 planning and other
 concerns of adult
 siblings. This first in
 a series of "Sibling
 Survival Sessions" to
 connect siblings with
 vital information and helpful resources.
 Don Meyer's book, "The Sibling Survival
 Guide" will be discussed. Event is FREE.



For All

Dec 7 8:30 am—11:30 am

Santa Celebration
SOLD OUT



Dec 11 6 pm—8 pm

Let's Talk Housing
Mad Apple—Appleton
 Co-hosting with SOAR Fox Cities

MAR 1-28

**Siblings Are My Peeps Photo
 Contest**

MAR 6

**Vegas Madness—Casino
 Night Fundraiser**

Mar 7

K.I.T.E. Conference for
 parents, self-advocates,
 adult sibs, and professionals
FVTC, 1825 N Bluemound Dr, Appleton

MAR 28

Kidz Expo 9:00 am—2:00 pm
 Fox Cities Exhibition Center, Appleton

More events and details at
www.wisconsibs.org or call
920-968-1742

Family Caregiving in WI

Finding it difficult to secure care for your sibling or other family member? In Wisconsin a shortage of formal caregivers or direct care workers has created a crisis for people with disabilities, older adults, and their families. The need for direct care workers is projected to increase by an additional 20,000 workers by 2026.

In 2016, a statewide survey of more than 500 people who rely on direct

care services and their families found 85% did not have enough workers to cover all their shifts.

Families, including young and adult siblings, are the backbone of the caregiving industry in Wisconsin, providing an estimated 80% of all care.

Caregiving a family member has a cost. On average, a U.S. family caregiver will spend \$7000/year out-of-pocket on the needs of their loved one. Over half experience feelings of depression, weight gain, or have trouble sleeping.*

As WisconSibs, we believe connecting siblings with one another and with information helps them become resilient individuals and when asked, better prepared caregivers.

WisconSibs, Inc is a member of the **Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance** to address the needs of family caregivers and help provide information.



2018 Sibling's Choice—Family Caregiver Award winners, Leland & Barbara McDonald

Top Tips for Caregivers**

1. **Seek support from other caregivers.** You are not alone!
2. **Take care of your own health** so that you can be strong enough to take care of your loved one.
3. **Accept offers of help** and suggest specific things people can do to help you.
4. Caregiving is hard work. **Take respite breaks** often.

**<https://caregiveraction.org/resources/10-tips-family-caregivers>

For additional information on supporting families and providing care for loved ones, visit Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance at wisconsinfamilycaregiver.org/alliance

*2017 Embracing Carers study

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- We are Wisconsin siblings of people with disabilities.
- We are role models to our siblings, our peers, our friends, and our community.
- We are caregivers and companions. Even the very youngest of us help care for our siblings with special needs.
- As we grow, we play a vital role in the quality of life of our siblings.



Summer 2020 Sib Camp Dates

Three **Sib Camp** (Door County) dates have been set:

Session 1: **June 18-21, 2020**
Ages 9-14 Peninsula State Park

Session 2: **August 3-6, 2020**
Ages 9-11 Wagon Trail Resort

Session 3: **August 9-12, 2020**
Ages 12-16 Wagon Trail

SibDays of Summer Tentatively scheduled for July 20-24, 2020

Watch the website for updates and additional sessions.

