We began 2018 with the retirement of the IndependenceFirst architect, Lee Schulz. I would like to express our gratitude to Lee for his dedication, compassion and vision in building the programs that serve so many and advocating for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the many who are in need of the services we provide.

2019 is our 40th anniversary year! We will celebrate this milestone with our partners, supporters and the people we serve while seeking to impact the lives of even more people with disabilities and attracting new supporters for our cause.
The IndependenceFirst Board of Directors dedicated a great amount of time and effort to the organization in 2018 and for that I am grateful. We participated in a number of facets of our organization and spent time getting to know our staff and their work. We took on the challenge of executing a CEO search. We were very careful to profile the current and future needs of each program we provide and consider the core values and mission of IndependenceFirst. I am very pleased with our Board’s efforts and results.

Deb Langham, our Chief Operating Officer, accepted the role of Interim President & CEO of IndependenceFirst for the better part of 2018 and led us through a very active year. Deb helped us navigate a number of important decisions, keeping us moving forward while providing the high-quality services the community has come to expect. The entire Board of Directors is grateful for her leadership and would like to recognize her service.

We partnered with Leading Transitions to arrange a nationwide CEO search. An Executive Search Committee led by Board Member Tom Rave selected Marcia (Marci) Boucher as the new President & CEO. Marci relocated from Modesto, California, in late 2018 to begin the position in January 2019. Marci accepted the role of CEO on the eve of our 40th Anniversary and will serve us all well into the future. I encourage everyone to attend one of our 2019 fundraisers to meet Marci.

2019 is our 40th anniversary year! We will celebrate this milestone with our partners, supporters and the people we serve while seeking to impact the lives of even more people with disabilities and attracting new supporters to our cause.

I have mentioned it before and I will mention it again: It is the people we employ and the people we serve who make this all worthwhile and fulfilling. We have a fantastic staff.

I encourage you to participate in our events this year, support our fundraisers and reach out to Marci, myself or any Board Member to learn more about IndependenceFirst and how you can help us as we continue to serve thousands of people with disabilities each year with dedication and innovation.
We have accomplished a lot this year, continuing to build upon our strong foundation to best serve the community. The legacy of innovation that Lee Schulz, who served as President & CEO for more than 30 years, left upon his retirement in April lives on. Lee began his tenure with a $260,000 budget, growing it to $31 million. Thanks to Lee’s leadership, we enter our 40th year with more than 20 programs and services that meet the evolving needs of individuals with disabilities.

I speak for all of us at IndependenceFirst in saying that it has been an honor to serve individuals with disabilities this year and to work to make our communities more accessible; we look forward to celebrating our 40th anniversary with everyone who has been involved with our organization for the past 40 years as we look ahead to the next 40.
As an organization that is responsive to what individuals with disabilities in our community want and need while ensuring organizational financial sustainability, we sometimes expand and offer new programs, and, at times, discontinue programs.

In the category of expansion, we are now contracted with Anthem through our Personal Care department to provide independent assessments to Anthem Medicaid consumers in need of personal care. This past year also saw the new Representative Payee program begin serving individuals with disabilities with financial management services.

In the category of program discontinuation, during the summer of 2018, an advisory group was tasked with determining the fiscal sustainability of the Mobility Store program. After much research and analysis, our Board of Directors made the difficult decision to cease operations of the two Mobility Stores by February 2019. IndependenceFirst acquired the Mobility Store (then called the Wheelchair Recycling Program) in 2012. The Mobility Store was funded in part through the Wisconsin Assistive Technology Advisory Council through the WisTech Grant, and was run in collaboration with the Wisconsin correctional system. Individuals are being referred to other durable medical equipment dealers handling recycled equipment in our area.

This year, IndependenceFirst was involved in advocacy initiatives in support of the Disability Integration Act and against cuts and limitations to healthcare access for people with disabilities. We also collaborated with the City of Milwaukee Election Commission and several other nonprofit organizations to educate people with disabilities on the voting process and their voting rights, as well as giving them the opportunity to register to vote.

The search for our new President & CEO began last spring. Our Board of Directors went through a comprehensive hiring process to find us the best leader, one who can continue to move us forward through changing landscape. I’m thrilled to announce that in December, Marci Boucher was named the President & CEO of IndependenceFirst.

I speak for all of us at IndependenceFirst in saying that it has been an honor to serve individuals with disabilities this year and to work to make our communities more accessible; we look forward to celebrating our 40th anniversary with everyone who has been involved with our organization for the past 40 years as we look ahead to the next 40.
2018 CONSUMER SUMMARY

Total number of people served in 2018: 9,408
Additional individuals impacted through staff community activities: 11,988

AGE OF CONSUMERS
- Under 19: 31%
- 20-24: 6%
- 25-59: 35%
- 60+: 28%

GENDER
- Women: 53%
- Men: 47%

RACE AND ETHNICITY
- African American: 43%
- White: 30%
- Russian: 16%
- Hispanic/Latino: 11%

PEOPLE SERVED BY COUNTY
- Milwaukee: 68%
- Ozaukee: 5%
- Washington: 6%
- Waukesha: 19%
- Other Counties: 2%

DISABILITY OF PEOPLE SERVED
- Cognitive: 33%
- Mental/Emotional: 6%
- Physical: 36%
- Hearing or Vision: 2%
- Multiple Disabilities: 23%

PROGRAM SERVICES IMPACT
- 1,081: Number of those benefiting from the Independent Living Services Program
- 1,366: Individuals who receive Personal Care Services in their homes
- 3,681: Number of people utilizing Information and Referral Services
- 1,061: Individuals impacted through Assistive Technology, Substance Use Disorder Services, Computer Recycling, Benefits Counseling and WisLoan/Telework
- 2,219: Number of people served by both Mobility Stores in 2018
There are an estimated 500,000 people in Wisconsin who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind. Approximately 18.5% of the general population experiences a mental illness each year, so 92,500 Wisconsin residents who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind may need mental health services if this population experiences mental illness at the same rate (and evidence suggests that the rate may be two to three times that of the general population). In Wisconsin, there are only two therapists who provide counseling services in American Sign Language, so most individuals in this population seek counseling services from providers who don’t share their experiences and may have little to no understanding of their needs and rights.

That’s where Denise Johnson comes in. She’s an IndependenceFirst employee who works as the Wisconsin Statewide Project Coordinator for Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Services for People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind. As a professional who is Deaf, Denise brings her lived experience to the work that she does.

“My job really in a nutshell is to break down the barriers so that people can receive the services that they need,” Denise said.
Over the 16 years Denise has been with Independence First, she has trained hundreds of service providers on the experiences, needs and rights of people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind. She also trains people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind on mental health, substance use disorder prevention, knowing their rights and much more. Additionally, she serves as a resource and occasionally mediates.

Denise has been working with Janet Fleege, Assistant Program Administrator at Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division - Community Access to Recovery Services, for the past 12 years. Denise comes in about once a year to train up to 100 mental health and substance use disorder service professionals.

“I think Denise helps to ensure that we have the right tools, that we ask the right questions,” Janet said. “She is necessary to be a bridge, and to help us help others.”

In September 2018, Denise Johnson was honored with the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force Karen Avery Award for her work increasing access to substance use disorder and mental health treatment services for people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind. The Karen Avery Award honors the legacy of former Independence First Associate Director Karen Avery. Karen was a tireless advocate for people with disabilities, with a special focus on those with mental health disabilities. Denise works throughout the state of Wisconsin to increase access to culturally-sensitive, language-appropriate and accessible treatment and recovery services through education, referral and advocacy.
Youth programs

Growing up can be tough. Every kid has challenges to navigate, be it working to get good grades; navigating family relationships, friendships and dating; having first work experiences; planning for the future; and more. As we know, too many kids also experience bullying, abuse or the effects of poverty such as hunger or housing instability. Youth with disabilities experience the same things as other kids and on top of this, they face unique obstacles such as people’s limiting ideas about what they are capable of due to their disability, as well as lack of accessibility and inclusion.

To address these needs, IndependenceFirst coordinates services for youth with disabilities ages 11 to 26 in the metro Milwaukee area.

In 2018, our youth programs helped 716 young people with disabilities succeed in school, participate in fun and educational summer activities, connect with one another and learn skills for healthy and fulfilling social relationships and make the transition from high school to college and the workplace.

Grace (left) reflects on her Youth Leadership Summit experience

What I have experienced during my four years as a participant at the Youth Summit has been nothing but a good learning experience and a wonderful time to meet new people. When I’m not at the summit sometimes I feel really unconfident about myself and kind of sad. But every time I go to the summit, it refreshes my memory on how to be more confident and how to stand up for myself in certain situations.
Representative Payee Program

Some disabilities either temporarily or permanently impact people’s ability to manage their money, making tasks like paying bills on time and budgeting to cover basic needs difficult to impossible. When people find themselves in this situation, it is important that they can turn to someone to help them who they can trust.

IndependenceFirst identified a need within our community for these kinds of financial management services and started our Representative Payee Program in 2018. This program provides services for people with disabilities who receive Social Security income and who have been identified as needing assistance managing their benefits.

The Rep Payee program staff work with people with disabilities to develop a budget to ensure that needs for housing, food and clothing are met. Once the basics are addressed, staff help budget monthly income to pay past due bills, develop plans for future expenditures and provide spending money.

Our goal is to help each individual become as financially independent as possible. The program is currently serving approximately 100 people, and we anticipate continual expansion as we work to meet the community need for these services.

Assistive technology

For people with disabilities the ability to independently perform necessary, everyday activities provides an important sense of empowerment and the control to do things a person’s own way. Physical and/or cognitive disabilities can make everyday tasks (cooking, reading the time on a clock, getting into the bathtub, making a phone call, etc.) impossible or extremely difficult to perform independently. Assistive Technology (AT) can often be employed to make these activities possible, enabling people to live productive, autonomous lives.

Our AT Coordinators work with people who have disabilities to assess their needs and recommend appropriate equipment. In our WisTech AT Loan and Demonstration Center, which includes over 1,300 AT products, people with disabilities can use a “hands-on” approach to try different AT devices to see what suits their needs before they make a purchase.

In 2018, we worked with 307 people with disabilities, family members and service
IndependenceFirst actively promotes individual and systems advocacy to facilitate policy changes on important issues within the community and to empower people to advocate for themselves in their daily lives.

**Advocacy**

Brian Peters, our Community Access & Policy Specialist, ensures that IndependenceFirst and the people we serve have information and a voice in what happens in our four-county service area. He has worked with community planning processes through the city of Milwaukee for the Harbor District, transit-oriented development in the planning of the streetcar routes, and with both the city and county of Milwaukee on adaptive bikes. He assists the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission with outreach to the disability community to ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to weigh in on the future of our community.

He also works collaboratively with community groups to improve accessibility in the community, to increase accessible transportation options and to increase the amount of decent, safe, affordable, accessible, healthy and integrated housing stock for people with disabilities.

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Providers to empower them as knowledgeable purchasers of assistive technology. Our AT staff also provided Assistive Technology education and demonstration to 164 health care students, 73 health care professionals and 169 individuals from community groups. We are empowering future and current health care providers to help their clients be as independent as possible with the help of the right assistive technology.

**Assistive technology helped Tim succeed at work**

*Tim is a person with a disability who works in the mailing/supplies department of the USDA Forest Management*

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Tim is a person with a disability who works in the mailing/supplies department of the USDA Forest Management Division. He was increasingly struggling with remembering his routine. He contacted IndependenceFirst and began working with our Assistive Technology staff to explore possible solutions. One idea that the Assistive Technology staff brought up was the idea that he could use his smartphone to set notifications that would remind him to complete various tasks. This strategy and training on how to set the notifications on his phone helped him tremendously to finish his daily tasks in the workplace with greater efficiency and accuracy.

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Angela has followed in her mother’s footsteps in more ways than one. Angela credits her mother with teaching her how to love and care for people. Both women pursued careers providing in-home Personal Care Services through Independence First.

“I loved taking care of people,” Angela said. “That’s the only thing I ever wanted to do.”

Before providing Personal Care Services at Independence First, Angela worked in nursing homes and group homes, bringing her steadfast commitment to care to every setting. When managers at one of the nursing homes didn’t believe that a resident was being abused, Angela hid in the resident’s closet and caught the abuser, finally ending the abuse.

As time passed, Angela decided that she’d rather take care of people in their own homes, and she started working at Independence First in 1998.

Angela’s mother eventually acquired a disability and needed Personal Care Services, which she received through Independence First.
When Angela was in her mid-40s, she followed in her mother’s footsteps again when she also acquired a disability, making the change from caregiver to receiver of care. Before, she had told herself that if she ever needed in-home care, she too would go through IndependenceFirst. Thinking about that for some future time was much different than suddenly having to face the reality of her new life.

“I didn’t want to accept it at first,” Angela said. “I had to start getting used to it.”

Luckily, Angela got paired with IndependenceFirst RN Care Coordinator Joanna Estrada, and the two have a relationship filled with trust, support and laughter.

“I love my nurse,” Angela said. “I’m the type of person, I have to be comfortable with someone I know cares, that’s focused on nothing but what you need and puts your care above all. And Joanna has that.

“Even when I’m a little depressed sometimes, Joanna can talk to me, make me feel better, put a smile back on my face.”

Joanna has helped Angela connect with other IndependenceFirst programs too, like when she needed some assistance finding a new place to live.

“I can never go wrong with IndependenceFirst; I’m just going to put it like that,” Angela said. “I trust them.”

It’s been a big year for the Personal Care Services department! We have a new partnership with Wisconsin Anthem Medicaid to serve more people with disabilities as well as generate additional revenue for our agency. We have also switched to a new software system giving us increased functionality while reducing costs.

**Independent assessment contract with Wisconsin Anthem Medicaid**

In addition to providing Personal Care Services to more than 1,300 people per year, IndependenceFirst is now contracted to provide third-party independent assessments to all of Anthem’s members who receive personal care services throughout the state, working to ensure that people receive the services they need to remain independent.

Beginning at the end of August 2018, nurses in the IndependenceFirst Personal Care Services department have been completing assessments in the homes of Anthem Medicaid members. Their reports are submitted to Anthem with recommendations of care needs. Anthem then makes a determination of what services to authorize for personal care for their Medicaid HMO members.

The rigor we have undergone throughout the process of contracting and auditing with Anthem’s national plan has made our program stronger and our procedures even more streamlined. Meeting and exceeding the standards of the oldest and largest insurance company in the country is no small feat.

We are pleased to have this opportunity to help more people receive the services they need to remain independent.
New software to cut costs and streamline operations

On October 1, 2018, the Personal Care Services department successfully launched an all-in-one practice management software system, the culmination of much work and many projects. It began many months prior with process mapping all functions, working on interdisciplinary teams to develop functional use cases, researching software platforms and participating in a rigorous selection process.

The new software platform—Carecenta—allows the Personal Care Services department to best optimize reimbursement, increase revenue, streamline processes and increase productivity. Because the system has a single data source and is fully HIPAA compliant, it increases compliance and security overall.

Carecenta also brings savings through printing costs (the Personal Care department is now almost 100% paperless) and increased capacity to manage and work accounts receivable and billing.

We look forward to another year of innovation and growth in 2019.

RN Care Coordinator honored as ‘Health Care Hero’

We are pleased to announce that IndependenceFirst RN Care Coordinator Mariya Gozenpud was selected from over 80,000 nurses working in Wisconsin as a BizTimes Health Care Hero in 2018. Mariya has dedicated her life in service to individuals with disabilities, empowering them to live independent lives through her work in the IndependenceFirst Personal Care Services program.

Mariya, who is bilingual in Russian and English, is known as a strong advocate who empowers her consumers to speak up for their own needs as she advocates alongside them and their families for what is best in their care choices. Mariya demonstrates dedication, perseverance,
After a four-year hiatus, IndependenceFirst once again held our annual gala featuring a well-known speaker with a disability.

The IndependenceFirst Empower Lunch took place on November 1, 2018, and featured Keynote Speaker Will Lautzenheiser, who guided event attendees on an emotional journey that was dotted with humor. Lautzenheiser was the subject of the documentary “Stumped,” which was the opening night movie at the 2017 Milwaukee Film Festival.

The Empower Lunch brought together business and community leaders in support of IndependenceFirst’s work for full inclusion of people with disabilities in our community while they learned about Lautzenheiser’s remarkable experiences.

After a severe bacterial infection led to the amputation of both of his arms and both of his legs, Lautzenheiser embarked on a long recovery process. As he recovered, he took up stand-up comedy as a way to express himself, adjust to his new life, and raise visibility of people with disabilities and disability issues. Eventually, he decided to undergo a double arm transplant, which was successful.

In addition to Will’s extraordinary story, the Empower Lunch also included the presentation of the first Martha Valerio Disability Advocacy Award. Martha was a dedicated disability advocate and mentor who served as a member of the IndependenceFirst Board of Directors for 14 years. The Martha Valerio Disability Advocacy Award was presented to Seria Johnson, a young woman who is a strong advocate and mentor for people with disabilities.

We are grateful to everyone who attended, donated and volunteered, and to the sponsors who made the event possible.
Stride & Glide brought the community together in support of IndependenceFirst

IndependenceFirst’s ninth annual Stride & Glide run/walk event was held on Saturday, May 19, 2018, at the IndependenceFirst main office in Milwaukee’s Walker’s Point and Harbor District neighborhoods. Stride & Glide is a family-friendly fundraising event that includes a 5K Run, Walk and Wheelchair Race, Zumba, a Family Fun Walk and Kids’ Activities. In 2018, 12 event sponsors, 13 in-kind donors and 102 volunteers helped to make the event a success for the individuals, families and corporate teams that participated. Thank you to everyone who made Stride & Glide 2018 a success—we look forward to another fantastic day of fitness and fun at Stride & Glide 2019 on June 15.

Volunteers are an instrumental part of IndependenceFirst operations

In 2018 281 volunteers generously gave 2,958 hours of service to IndependenceFirst. These volunteers provided important assistance in working for the IndependenceFirst mission through a wide variety of volunteer positions.

We acknowledged our volunteers during a “Volunteer Superheroes” event where volunteers got to make their own superhero capes. We presented certificates of appreciation to our volunteers, including 17 individuals who provided over 100 hours of service.
THANK YOU to all IndependenceFirst CONTRIBUTORS

Donors $10,000+
Alvin and Marion Birnschein Foundation, Inc.
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Greater Milwaukee Foundation-
Eugene J. Hayman IndependenceFirst Fund
Potawatomi Hotel & Casino
Rockwell Automation Charitable Corporation
United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County

IndependenceFirst was excited to be selected as a Potawatomi Hotel & Casino Heart of Canal Street beneficiary.

We were one of 31 organizations to receive funds through Potawatomi Hotel & Casino’s annual community program. We received $35,391 in support of our Youth Programs. Our deepest gratitude to Potawatomi Hotel & Casino for this significant gift and for their ongoing commitment to the community through the Heart of Canal Street program.

Donors $1,000-$4,999
Advocate Aurora Health Care, Inc.
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Donors $5,000-$9,999
Anonymous
Brewers Community Foundation
I am very thankful that Independence First has the services they provide. Has been a great help for me in every way.

Mr. Ted D. Kellner  
Mutual of America  
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The Evjue Foundation, Inc.  
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United Heartland  
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WEC Energy Group  
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Wochinske Family Foundation, Inc.

Donors $500-$999

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Donors $100-$499

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My son has learned healthy relationship training which has helped me give him more space with social outings.

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In Memory of Richard Barthel
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In Memory of Joyce C. Smith
Mr. Dale R. Smith

In Memory of Noreen Ryan & James Urdan
Ms. Joan Urdan

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of our donor lists. If you note an error, please accept our sincere apologies and inform the Fund Development & Communications Office at 414-226-8304 V/Relay.
Innovative strategies and new service offerings in our Personal Care Services program kept it healthy and the largest at an Independent Living Center in Wisconsin.

- In 2018, the agency undertook a detail review of the cost vs benefit of all programs leading to difficult decisions to close down the Mobility Store, the Accessible Model Home and our consulting/research subsidiary. These actions resulted in a charge of $407,000 against earnings, but have left the agency in a stronger financial position going forward.

- Consistent with the general market, our investment portfolio showed an 8% decline from October through December. Most of this unrealized loss was recouped in the first quarter of 2019.

- Fee for Service revenue continued to increase with the addition of a Rep Payee Program.
# STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY

**Year ended December 31, 2018**

## REVENUE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- ACL Centers for Independent Living: $311,951
- Social Security Administration: $99,958

State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services
- Center for Independent Living: $32,969
- AODA: $106,224
- Universal Service Fund: $35,242
- Title VII CH 1 Part B Independent Living Services: $398

State of Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services
- Special Programs for the Aging: $30,000
- Paralysis Resource Center - Foundation Grant: $40,000
- ACL Assistive Technology: $120,104
- ACL Independent Living State Grants: $27,835

Personal Care Services Program: $26,899,754
- Foundations/Grants: $142,048
- United Way: $91,740
- Entrepreneurial Efforts: $38,615
- Fund Development: $37,627
- In-kind Contributions: $135,197
- Program Service Fees: $445,613
- Mobility Store Revenue: $378,165
- Gain on Interest Rate Swap: $64,460
- Rent Income: $170,220
- Recovery of Bad Debt: $84,388
- Other Revenue: $16,879

Net Investment Return: $(996,172)

Total Revenue: $28,313,215

## EXPENSES

Salaries/Burdens: $27,222,418
- Operational: $1,072,631
- Contractual Services: $543,971
- General/Administrative Expenses: $1,951,367

Total Expenses: $30,790,387

Change in Net Assets: $(2,477,172)

Net Assets, Beginning of the Year: $22,449,719

NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR: $19,972,547

*This combined statement includes IndependenceFirst, Inc., IndependenceFirst Foundation and subsidiary.*
Marci Boucher—President & CEO
IndependenceFirst

Board of Directors

Mike Lipscomb—Chair
Director Enterprise Accounts,
UPS International Services

Beth L. Schumacher—Vice Chair
Community Advocate

John Lauber—Treasurer
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Kevin Ronnie—Secretary
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Judy Haugsland—At Large
Director of Development,
Milwaukee School of Engineering

Jason Ostrowski—At Large
Retired Analyst, WE Energies

Tom Rave—At Large
Retired Banking and Economic
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Catherine Bulgrin
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Community Advocate

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Dean Muller
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Billie Torrentt
Chief Operating Officer, Goodwill Industries
of Southeastern Wisconsin

Jesse Waukau
Finance Project Leader, GE Healthcare
LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019

Meet our new President & CEO

After an extensive nationwide search, the IndependenceFirst Board of Directors selected Marci Boucher as the organization’s new President & Chief Executive Officer, and Boucher began in her new role on January 14. Relocating to Milwaukee from California for the position, Boucher brings 30 years of management experience, most recently spending nearly a decade as the Executive Director of the Society for disABILITIES in Modesto, California. Under Boucher’s leadership, the Society for disABILITIES grew from serving 175 people per year to helping more than 27,000 individuals annually across all programs. Boucher’s advocacy efforts were instrumental in the state of California’s declaration of June as Disability Awareness Month and she was named Philanthropist of the Year by the Association of Fundraising Professionals for helping to raise over $35 million to ensure access to food and shelter and to help people with disabilities live a life of self-sufficiency.

“In 2019, we will work with our amazing team of staff, volunteers and Board of Directors to celebrate our 40th anniversary of serving the community where we live and work,” Marci said. “I look forward to working with everyone and to another successful year. We will look at ways of streamlining the organization to run more cost effectively and create a strategic plan that enhances the continuity of the organization.

“Steve Jobs said, ‘Great things in business are never done by one person. They’re done by a team of people.’ On behalf of IndependenceFirst, please allow me to extend my personal and genuine appreciation to each and every one of you for your valuable contributions to this organization. I look forward to working with each of you in the year and years to come.”

Celebrating our 40th year with a new look

IndependenceFirst is excited to be celebrating our 40th year of service to the community in 2019. We are commemorating our ruby anniversary with a celebratory logo that represents our first 40 years of service and also shows how these first 40 years are just the beginning! We are continuing our tradition of providing high-quality, innovative services that empower people with disabilities and foster an inclusive society into the next 40 years and beyond.
The First Resource for People with Disabilities

IndependenceFirst is the FIRST resource that people in Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee and Washington counties turn to with questions about access and disability. We offer more than 20 programs and services to people with disabilities of all kinds, in all age groups. We provide programs on disability awareness, access and being an inclusive employer to the general community. Over 50% of our staff, managers and Board have disabilities themselves, and this peer approach leads to excellent outcomes.


Join our 40th anniversary celebration at one of our 2019 events featuring Green Bay Packers Super Bowl Champion LeRoy Butler!

Walk on Team LeRoy at Stride & Glide for IndependenceFirst, a family-friendly 5K that will be held on June 15, 2019. For more information, visit www.StrideAndGlide.org.

Learn about LeRoy’s extraordinary journey “From Wheelchair to the Lambeau Leap” on November 6, 2019, at the IndependenceFirst Empower Lunch—watch for more details.

We hold many classes, support groups and consumer advocacy team meetings throughout the year. Check our website, www.independencefirst.org, or call 414-291-7520 V/Relay to learn more about upcoming events.

REAL PEOPLE. REAL CHANGE.