

The WSPEI Connector

June 2025

Communicating Information and Resources for Wisconsin Families and Educators

The school year is almost over and summer is upon us in Wisconsin! ☀️

It's been a full and rewarding year for the WSPEI Program. We're so grateful to all the new subscribers to this newsletter and those who've been with us from the start! Our community continues to grow, and we're thrilled to have you along as we share resources and information that support Wisconsin's scholars, families, and educators.



This month, we're excited to spotlight two fantastic Family Resource Guides designed for families and caregivers, along with inspiring conversations with two incredible individuals dedicated to supporting Wisconsin's American Indian students and families.

CONGRATULATIONS on wrapping up another school year—we hope you get a chance to relax and enjoy the slower pace of summer! 🍹

Our newsletter will be taking a short summer break in July, but we'll be back in your inboxes come August! The Transition to Adulthood topic will return then too.

~The WSPEI Program Team

****Quick update – we have a new name!** We're transitioning from *The WSPEI Project* to *The WSPEI Program*. Same dedicated team, same important work—just a new name!

WSPEI Program Learning and Networking Opportunities

THANK YOU for joining us this year!

The WSPEI Learning and Networking Events are complete for this school year.

We appreciated the time spent together and hope you left with new resources or fresh ideas for partnering with families you serve or with your child's school.

Over the summer, our team will be reviewing your feedback and suggestions for future workshops.

Big thanks to everyone who took the time to complete one of our surveys! 📧

Workshop and Network offerings for Fall of 2025 will become available in August. Stay tuned!

WI FACETS

WI FACETS is Wisconsin's Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) funded through the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. WI FACETS has a large variety of resources, upcoming trainings, and webinar recordings to help families navigate special education. Check out the WI FACETS [Training Calendar](#), WI FACETS [Webinar Recordings](#) as well as WI FACETS [resources webpages](#).

The WI FACETS Family Engagement June Newsletter is highlighting information and resources about ADD & ADHD. Additionally there is a bunch of ideas for summer activities for families and their children.

[June Newsletter English](#)

[June Newsletter Spanish](#)

Information from Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

Wisconsin Disability Policy Leadership Program

We are thrilled to announce the launch of Year 2 of the Wisconsin Disability Policy Leadership Program, an innovative program to empower people with developmental disabilities and their family members to engage in policy advocacy and leadership.

The Wisconsin Disability Policy Leadership Program aims to train future leaders by giving people the knowledge and skills necessary to impact disability policy and advocate for change through a year-long paid Fellowship. This program focuses on professional development, offering valuable work experience and mentoring to enhance career opportunities in the disability policy and advocacy field.

Who Should Apply?

The Fellowship Program is open to individuals with developmental disabilities and family members of people with developmental disabilities who are committed to disability rights advocacy.

Individuals with experience with state or local advocacy, strong communication skills, and the ability to work both independently and as part of a team. We will be recruiting for 2 Fellows.

The application deadline is June 27th, 2025 at 5pm.

For additional information and links to registration, click [HERE](#)

Please contact Sally Flaschberger at sally.flaschberger@wisconsin.gov or 608-266-5038 with any questions.

WI-BPDD June Newsletter

[June Newsletter English](#)

[June Newsletter Spanish](#)

Wisconsin Conferences

Join others from around the state!

Annual Wisconsin “Staycation” and Autism Summit

We’re thrilled to invite you to the Autism eXchange Annual Conference and Staycation, a gathering dedicated to advancing understanding, support and innovation in Autism research and services in your community! The conference brings together a diverse group of experts, advocates, caregivers, and individuals on the Autism Spectrum to share insights and strategies that make a difference.

Dates: July 11-12, 2025

Location: Wilderness Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

Learn more on the [Conference Website](#)

[Register to Attend](#)

Endless Possibilities Conference

[2025 Endless Possibilities Conference](#)

Bridging Success: Empowering Every Learner!

Date: Tuesday, August 5, 2025

In person – Location: [Waukesha County Technical College, Pewaukee Campus](#)

[Registration is open!](#)

This year we welcome Mike Hipple as our keynote speaker to share his first-hand experience and talk about technology and accommodations for students. We will also hear from young adults with lived experience in special education, delve into dynamic discussions around how to support engaged readers, learn what others are doing to support positive outcomes for students with disabilities to achieve their goals, and much more.

Self-Determination by Design: Your Life, Your Way

Dates: October 20 - 22, 2025

Location: Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

For more information, visit: www.sdc.wi-bpdd.org

Registration Opens: July 1, 2025

Save the Date and mark your calendars now!

[2025 Children Come First Conference](#)

Dates: November 3rd-4th, 2025

Location: Kalahari Resort • Wisconsin Dells, WI

As one of the largest and longest-running family-driven events in the state, this conference is dedicated to addressing the pressing needs of children and families living with mental and behavioral health issues.

 **CONGRATULATIONS to WINONA CARUFEL!** 

 **Recipient of the INDIAN PARENT OF THE YEAR AWARD!!!** 

Recently, two members of WSPEI staff had the opportunity to sit down for a conversation with **Winona Carufel, a parent and member of the Lac du Flambeau tribe**, and the recent recipient of the **Indian Parent of the Year Award** sponsored by the [Wisconsin Indian in Education Association](#).

About this award:

INDIAN PARENT(S) OF THE YEAR Indian parent(s) who serve as dedicated natural role models who are consistently proactive and involved in their children's tribal cultural education, their academic school based education/activities and their tribal community.

Criteria: Explain how the nominee demonstrates the following:

- Shares leadership role in community and education activities
- Serves as a model to other Indian parents and children through participation in community activities
- Active volunteer in school and community events
- Promotes American Indian culture and heritage throughout the community
- Encourages parents and children to strive for personal excellence

Winona is an active member of the Head Start Policy board. She has a passion for early intervention and early childhood development. By being engaged with the policy council she learned how important it is for at least one parent to show up. ***"Oftentimes I was the only parent in the room. Just showing up is important."***

All of Winona's children have received services at the Lac du Flambeau Head Start. Because she attended Head Start as a young child, she knew that this would be a good place for her children to receive supports and services in Early Childhood Education. ***"When I became a parent and then a head start parent, I was prompted to learn about child development"***.

Her passion for learning led her to seek a doula certification through [The HOPE Consortium](#) which partnered with Family Health Center of Marshfield, INC. The HOPE Consortium, formed in 2015, is a partnership of organizations in northern Wisconsin that came together to support adults who are

seeking substance use disorder treatment and recovery support, as well as affected family members, with priority for those of childbearing age.

While talking about the impact of training to be a doula, Winona shared that: ***"I've always been great at protecting and advocating for others but not for myself until I became a doula. As a doula I can be authentic and open as I can be. I can help by supporting whole families who struggle with substance use, these are the needs in my community - we have young moms and families who struggle with substance use."***

Winona has also learned to be an advocate for herself as a neurodivergent, indigenous woman. For a long time, Winona struggled to receive a diagnosis. She learned that she had to be willing to unmask in front of her medical providers, and work through that emotion and grief. It took Winona working with the right therapist, as Winona states, ***"it was a journey we took together"*** to finally obtain the validation she needed. Winona said receiving her diagnosis, ***"...changed my life for the better."***

Winona is active in her children's education and IEP services. When asked about indigenous families' engagement with the public school system, Winona shared that ***"many families are not engaged. Tribal families are fearful of systems that have harmed them for so long."*** Winona encourages families to advocate for their children and communicate with school teams, working through systemic barriers. ***"Any way you are able to engage in the system, writing emails, please engage because it does make a difference."*** Winona says a family-school partnership can be built, ***"...as long as you continue to show up for the kids and show up for the parents who aren't able to be there."***

When asked how our schools can engage indigenous families, Winona shared that engagement must occur all year round. ***"You need to have a relationship with the tribal community all year long."*** She shared that a lot of outreach is done during November during "Native American month" but connections can be made to tribal traditions throughout the year.

Winona went on, ***"It makes a difference when our kids see themselves in the media and out in the community. It makes a difference to see ourselves in different programs and be a part of the community. Get input from indigenous people themselves, that is so important. Give us a seat at the table."***

On receiving the award, ***"I was quite surprised to receive the award, it is hard to see myself through this different light. It has been a lot of years of being the only parent to show up. Looking back, it feels really good to be recognized that I kept showing up. Am thankful for it."***

Gimaamiikwenamigo (congratulations), Winona, on receiving this award and Miigwech (thank you) for everything you do for your community!

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Meet Eva Kubinski 

WI DPI Consultant - American Indian Students / Traumatic Brain Injury / Orthopedic Impairment / Other Health Impairment / Cross-Categorical Special Education and Educator Preparation Programs / Adapted Physical Education

Last month, some WSPEI staff had the pleasure of speaking with Eva about her career journey and her deep commitment to supporting Wisconsin's American Indian students. Below is a summary of our conversation:

Eva has been an amazing member of the Special Education Team at the Department of Public Instruction for 19 years. ***"Choosing to come to DPI was the best thing I ever did,"*** Eva says. ***"Although I do miss working with the students and the families in schools."***

Eva arrived at DPI with a background as a School Psychologist and a technical assistance provider for a regional center located at the University of WI at Madison. Eva has worked in the Sun Prairie and Waterloo K-12 school districts. Eva also worked in the Menominee Indian School District. She has a deep passion for working with indigenous students and families. ***"I am a white ally. I know many in the American Indian tribes and I felt some kinship with my family background as immigrants from Poland. At times the country of Poland was occupied and the language and history was not allowed to be taught. "***

Eva appreciates an individualized approach to working with Indigenous students and families. ***"Every tribal nation is different,"*** Eva says. ***"There can be similarities, but also differences. They are different sovereign nations. The citizens across different tribal nations don't all have the same lived experience."***

Eva also shares that evaluating Indigenous students for Special Education services should be a thoughtful process. ***"The assessments that we use are not well normed for American Indian Students. The norms are often based on one or two out of the more than 500 Indigenous Nations nationwide. They are not the same as our Wisconsin nations."*** Eva encourages educators to 'think about how you think about things'. ***"We really need to look at a student. It's important that we don't assume what a student does or does not know."*** Eva commented that she loves the comprehensive evaluation process for Special Education. ***"It makes us look at the whole student, not just the siloed disability categories. This is a high-stakes assessment. We don't want to identify a student as having a disability if the student isn't truly disabled. That can happen if it isn't a true assessment result."***

Eva also emphasized the value of engaging the student and family throughout the process. ***"We have to talk to the parents and talk to the student. It's our job as adults to listen and give the students what they need."*** Eva goes on to highlight the importance of building strong, trusting relationships with the families she works with and creating a safe, welcoming space for them. ***"If families hear something that doesn't fit with what they know about their child, I hope they feel safe enough to push that and question the result."***

In Eva's role as a DPI consultant, she shares the importance of building relationships and getting to know those you support. ***"Have some personal connections,"*** she advises. ***"Knowing tribal leaders and families can help me be more approachable as a support person."***

Eva offers that it is never too late to better understand our Indigenous students and families we are working with. Eva suggests focusing on family engagement before an IEP meeting. ***“Ask about their experiences. Build those relationships. Explain assessments ahead of time. Invite a Tribal case worker along on family visits.”***

In building relationships with students, Eva says it’s important to explain and assure students about the evaluations they are undergoing. ***“Help them know and understand all the good skills they have.”***

Eva underscores her role in supporting school districts that serve Indigenous students and their families. ***“The WI DPI is here to support all the stakeholders when it comes to students with disabilities. I am here to help. I will help you try to find answers if I can.”***

Thank you, Eva, for your ongoing commitment to Wisconsin students with IEPs and their caregivers!

Eva's Contact information:

eva.kubinski@dpi.wi.gov

(608)266-2899

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Learn more:

[Wisconsin Tribal Nations](#)

[Wisconsin First Nations](#)

💡 **Spotlight on District Resource Guides!!** 💡



PARENT/GUARDIAN GUIDE: GETTING HELP FOR YOUR CHILD AT SCHOOL

Check out these great examples of work done by two WI school districts to connect families to information!

*Family/Guardian Resource Guides from Waunakee
and DC Everest School Districts*

As parents, guardians, or caregivers, you are essential partners in your child's education. At times, it can be difficult to know where to turn when concerns arise about your child's progress. These guides are designed to help families better understand how to navigate the Special Education process, using clear and accessible language to explain the steps involved in getting support at school.

[Waunakee School District Parent/Guardian Resource Guide - English](#)

[Waunakee School District Parent/Guardian Resource Guide - Spanish](#)

[Waunakee School District Transition Resource Guide - Moving from Student to Adulthood](#)

[DC Everest Family Guide](#)

If you are an educator or school interested in creating a Guide for Families specific to your District, Tiffany Loken, Director of Special Education for the Waunakee Community School District has offered to work with you and connect you with her graphic design folks to help you customize the guide.

HUGE THANKS to Tiffany and her team at Waunakee for this partnership!

You can reach her at:

tiffanyloken@waunakee.k12.wi.us

608-849-2000 X8268

Information from Wisconsin Family Support Organizations

UW-Madison Extension - Parenting and Family Relationships

Bright days ahead! Join us this summer for parenting classes and family relationship support.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension offers free and low-cost parenting and family relationship classes and resources for anyone caring for Wisconsin's children. The classes are virtual unless otherwise noted.

Class Topics Include:

Focus on Fathers

Hey dads! Your role matters. Join us for discussions on parenting, family life and how to handle modern challenges. A space for dads to support each other. Topics include teaching perspective taking, helping children make good choices, and helping children handle their big emotions.

Tuesdays | 6 PM

June 10, July 8, August 12

Resilient Co-Parenting

Are you new to co-parenting or want support as you navigate raising children together while living apart? These classes are for you. Join our community for ongoing co-parenting support. Topics include healthy coping during times of transitions and healthy boundaries between co-parents.

Thursdays | 7 PM

June 5, August 7

Raising Wisconsin's Children

Join other parents to discover and exchange practical, positive ideas that support your children's growth and your own well-being. Learn about screens and family media plans, how to talk to your kids about scary issues, and the benefits of child-led play.

Thursdays | 1 PM

June 19, July 17, August 21

[Link to Classes Calendar and Registration Information](#)

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The Northern Driftless Autism Support Group

The Northern Driftless Autism Support Group supports and is closely aligned with the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin as a supportive organization. In addition, NDASG works closely with the Autism Society of South-Central Wisconsin.

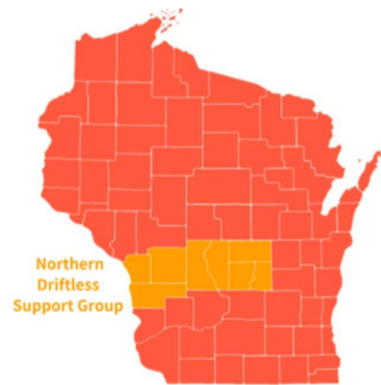
Mission: Creating connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with resources needed to live fully.

Contact information:

info@autismgreaterwi.org

www.autismgreaterwi.org/northern-driftless

[Flyer with additional information](#)



NAMI SE Wisconsin

NAMI Southeast Wisconsin (NAMI SEWI) is a nonprofit serving Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Jefferson counties. We provide free educational programs, support groups, and community presentations for individuals and families affected by mental health conditions.

FREE Classes and Support Groups:

[Schedule](#)

Ending the Silence:

Ending the Silence is a NAMI nation-wide initiative for middle and high school students. The engaging presentation which includes power points, videos, activities and testimonials helps students

learn about the warning signs of mental health conditions and what steps to take if they or a loved one may need help.

[Flyer with more information](#)

[Request for Presenters](#)

From Emmy-winning filmmakers and disability justice advocates Dan & Samuel Habib

The Ride Ahead

The Ride Ahead is going to be on PBS! We're thrilled to be a part of Season 38 of "POV," TV's longest-running series for nonfiction films! Mark your calendars to watch the broadcast premiere of *The Ride Ahead* this Disability Pride Month on July 21, 2025, at 10pm (check local PBS listing). Then the film will be available to stream for FREE on the PBS app and [POV website](#) through September.

Join the Ride! Screen and discuss *The Ride Ahead* at your middle/high school, college, community center, place of worship, conference, or workplace!

There are three options for hosting a screening:

- In person screenings: Purchase the Education Kit and screening license from our [online store](#)

- Virtual screenings: Purchase through [Kinema](#)
- Apply for a free Education Kit and screening license through our [Community Screening Campaign](#)

[Host a Screening Information](#)

Watch Samuel's Announcement Video

"Some of the best memories are made in flip flops"



In summer

The song sings itself
- William Carlos Williams



It was a splendid

summer morning and it
seemed as if nothing could go
wrong.
- John Cheever



Sun is shining.

Weather is sweet. Make you
wanna move your dancing feet.
- Bob Marley

WSPEI Coordinators are here to help!

Are you seeking resources or support related to Special Education and IEPs?
Information you provide on this form will help us connect you with your local
WSPEI Family-School Partnership Coordinator.

Click this button for the form to request WSPEI Staff Support

Email feedback and ideas of resources and information you would like to see from WSPEI

Have a great summer everyone!

Email: wspei@cesa12.org

Website: <https://wspei.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WisconsinStatewideParentEducatorInitiative>

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The WSPEI Program

www.wspei.org

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