



COUNCIL ON
PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

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PRESS RELEASE

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Wisconsin Council on Physical Disabilities Announces First Recipient of the Dan Johnson Advocacy Award



Pictured above from left to right: Ben Barrett, CPD, Chair;
John Nousaine, Award Recipient; Jeff Fox, CPD Member-At-Large.

MADISON, WI — The Wisconsin Council on Physical Disabilities (CPD) is pleased and honored to announce John Nousaine as the first recipient of the Dan Johnson Advocacy Award.

The Dan Johnson Advocacy Award is aimed at recognizing excellence in advocacy and public policy change for people with physical disabilities, rather than disability advocacy. To be selected, a nominated individual must be a person with a physical disability who advocates for people with physical disabilities and who has had a positive impact on federal or state legislation, public policy, or programs that affect people with disabilities in Wisconsin.

John Nousaine was 24 years old when he lost his leg in a construction accident. That event changed the course of his life. "As a white male it was my welcoming into the world of

discrimination," he said. "I never really realized that I was being judged just based on one single characteristic of my life until I started really trying to find a good job."

That "good job" came when he was hired to manage the fledgling independent living program run by Catholic Charities in Superior, Wisconsin. During his time in Superior, he worked to make North Country Independent Living a strong, free-standing non-profit with a simple mission, full inclusion for people with disabilities. He surrounded himself with other people with disabilities as staff and board members to ensure North Country continues the work of true independence where individuals with disabilities participate fully and society adapts as well.

When serving on the Governor appointed Independent Living Council of Wisconsin (ILCW) as the Independent Living representative he was informed he had to be resident of Wisconsin. As a result, John sold his home in Minnesota to serve on ILCW. This demonstrates John's commitment to the Independent Living (IL) movement and IL philosophy.

John Nousaine was also instrumental in obtaining funding for the assistive technology (AT) program in Wisconsin. The first year of the Tech Act of 1988, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) applied for funding and were unsuccessful. During the second year of the federal competitive grant award process, DHS contracted with John, then Executive Director of North Country for Independent Living, to write the proposal. The proposal focused on utilizing Wisconsin's eight Independent Living Centers (ILCs) to conduct the needs assessments and deliver AT services to people with disabilities. The grant proposal was funded in the amount of \$670,000, beginning the delivery of AT services statewide in 1991. This program is now known as WisTech and continues to provide AT services to this day.

John retired from North Country Independent Living in April 2019. That same year, he was also named "Citizen of the Year" in Superior. After several decades as a local, state, and national advocate for independence and independent living, he is keeping his options open and having some much needed relaxation in the form of fishing, diving, and skiing.

While the criteria for this award were stringent, the members of CPD feel they have found a recipient who exemplifies advocacy through action, just as Dan Johnson did. John makes everyone he meets feel enthusiastic and hopeful for their future. He encourages everyone to imagine their best self and then make a plan to become that person. North Country Independent Living, the state, and the nation have benefitted from the people John has encouraged to take part in their communities and be the change that is needed.

John Nousaine will be presented with the Dan Johnson Advocacy Award on Thursday, October 24, 2019. The ceremony will be held in the Inspiration Room at the Sheraton Hotel in Madison at 5:00 P.M. To learn more about the ceremony, please visit: cpd.wisconsin.gov/dj-award.htm.

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About the Dan Johnson Advocacy Award

Dan Johnson loved life and lived it to the fullest. He was one of many individuals who have had their lives turned upside down by an injury. Dan was much more than an advocate who possessed courage and unwavering persistence; he was generous, kind, compassionate, wise, funny, and gentle. His life was full of colleagues, friends, and family.

During Dan's 36 years of service at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, he was an influential advocate for people with physical disabilities. This award is in memory of Dan and his many accomplishments, and was created to recognize people with physical disabilities who are outstanding advocates.

To learn more, visit: cpd.wisconsin.gov/dj-award.htm.

About the Wisconsin Council on Physical Disabilities

The Wisconsin Council on Physical Disabilities (CPD) was created by the Wisconsin State Legislature in 1989 to address the needs of people with physical disabilities. The combined efforts of consumers, advocates, and legislators led to Wisconsin State Statute 46.29, which established the 14 member council and assigned the CPD with the following responsibilities:

- Develop, approve, and continue modification of a state plan for people with physical disabilities.
- Advise and make recommendations to state agencies on funding, programs, policies, and legislation that impact people with physical disabilities.
- Promote public awareness about the abilities of and barriers to people with physical disabilities.
- Encourage the development of programs and policies that prevent physical disabilities.
- Submit recommendations in an annual report to the state legislature on imposed ordinances related to accessible parking and motor vehicle use by people with disabilities (s. 346.50 (3m)).
- Consider all questions and matters concerning people with physical disabilities arising within the Council or brought to the Council for review.
- Form committees for consideration of policies or programs for people with physical disabilities.
- Meet at least four times annually.

CPD envisions a world where all people with physical disabilities have access to the same opportunities and life choices as all Wisconsin residents.

To learn more about the CPD, please visit: cpd.wisconsin.gov.