



A Word From Cindy: Winter 2026

No More R-Word

Recently, I heard that the President of the United States used the word *retarded* in a post online. For those of you that don't know, that word is referred to as the R-word by the disability community. It is a swear word—a bad word.

I don't think anybody should be calling anybody else the R-word at all. It is now the 21st century, and I feel that we need to let people know not to use the R-word in books or in schools. I keep hearing it all the time, even from parents who say things like, "My son or daughter is the R-word."

As Executive Director of People First Wisconsin (PFW), my response is, no. They are a person first. They were given a name and people should use it. For example, my name is Cindy, and that's what you should be calling me, not the R-word.

Our community has accomplished so much that we're very proud of. Let's agree not to listen to negativity. Please keep reminding people that the R-word is not appropriate and should not be used anymore. Spread the word to end the word!

Love, Cindy



PEOPLE FIRST WISCONSIN WINTER 2026

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We appreciate the leadership Larry showed by serving as the Milwaukee Chapter President and as a Member-at-Large on the statewide People First Wisconsin Executive Committee. We thank them for their advocacy, leadership, and friendship.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF LARRY & MARK

DEDICATED PFW MEMBERS & FRIENDS

We have sad news to share with all of you. Two long-time People First Wisconsin (PFW) members and friends, Larry Brown and Mark Hubbard, died in December. This is a huge loss for the disability advocacy community. Larry and Mark both shared really great ideas to improve support and services for people with disabilities.



Larry and Mark at
Disability Advocacy Day
in March 2024.

ASHLEY MATHY, PFW EXECUTIVE BOARD PRESIDENT SAID:

“They were really there for each other. They were two peas in a pod. You did not see one without the other. They really had each other’s backs; it was the true definition of friendship. They were such an important part of the disability community. This leaves a huge hole.”

PFW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CINDY BENTLEY SHARED:

“I remember meeting Larry for the first time when we were closing down Jackson Center where Mark lived. They were both fierce advocates. We talked about people with disabilities, the importance of strong faith, and independence. Larry and Mark lived their lives on their own terms. It is impressive that Larry took care of Mark just like a brother. They saw themselves as brothers.”

The Journey of Moving Out on My Own By: Nathaniel Lentz

It's officially 2026, and the start of a new year always makes me think about goal setting. For as long as I can remember, I've had 2 goals:

1. To get a bachelor's degree.
2. To live on my own.

I have achieved both of my long-term goals. In 2025, I moved out on my own. It has been a journey to get here. As I look back at where I started, I'm proud of what I've accomplished. Every journey starts with first steps.

My first step: saving up the money to move out. For 5 years, I've worked in disability advocacy, gaining valuable skills along the way. I got hired as an Outreach Advocate for People First Wisconsin (PFW). This led to other positions in advocacy and job coaching. I worked very hard to meet my personal and financial goals. Finally, I was able to save up enough money to move out!

My second step: see if I qualify for affordable housing and research what apartments would be available near the Madison area. I wasn't eligible for affordable housing, so I filled out contact forms for apartments I was interested in on www.Apartments.com. The Assistant Property Manager at one of the places I contacted, sent me an application. They helped me with my application and answered all of my questions before my move-in day. The staff at my new apartment continue to support me, as I get used to living on my own.

My third step: find people to help me move. My parents have been my best support system during my move and so have my friends and neighbors. I had a plan for loading the U-Haul, but two people backed out at the last minute. I reached out to my neighbor to see if he could help me. He said yes, and I am eternally grateful to him for stepping up. It made my move a lot easier. When we arrived at the apartment, friends and family helped me unpack and get settled. It was a stressful and challenging process, but I took the risk and was rewarded. You can do the same!

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PFW Pet Friends



Sydney and Sophia

Benefits of having pets

- Reduces Stress and Anxiety
- Reduces loneliness
- Increased exercise
- Unconditional love
- Greater sense of purpose



Priscilla Battle

Stephenie M.-Moe, Parker and Bleu



Nathaniel and Lobito



Jenny B.-Calypso



Cindy and Dory



Nancy G.-Maya and Lucky



Sydney and Chandler



In loving memory of
Zeus- Priscilla





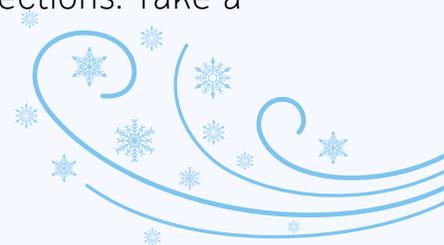
GETTING READY FOR WINTER WEATHER BY: MEARA HOLMBERG

SNOW CONTINUES TO BE IN THE FORECAST. HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY SAFE THIS WINTER:

- Before you make plans to go out in the wintertime, check the news or a weather app on your cell phone, tablet, or computer to see if there's a storm coming or any warnings about bad weather. This can help you plan activities for your day.
- Next, make sure you're wearing the appropriate clothes if you are going to spend time outside. Traveling in bad weather can be dangerous if you don't have the proper clothing, like a hat, a coat, a scarf and gloves and boots.
- Make sure to clear snow off of the sidewalk and driveway. You can shovel or snow plow a path on the sidewalk. When you are ready to leave by car, clean your windshield with an ice scraper if there's ice and snow on your vehicle. Watch for accidents around you and drive carefully.
- If you don't drive, check to make sure you have a clear path to walk or get to the bus stop. Be cautious when you are walking on the sidewalk and check the roads for slipperiness. Beware of snow drifts that can make it difficult to see cars on the street. Keep an eye out for black ice when walking on the sidewalk. If it occurs, look for a salt box. They are usually on street corners or at intersections. Take a scoop or two of salt out of the box and sprinkle it on icy areas.



If you use these suggestions, you will be ready
for the winter weather.





ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES & UPCOMING EVENTS BY: THE PFW NEWSLETTER TEAM

Advocacy in Action

With so many things going on, it can be tough to keep going and not get stuck. Here are a few things you can advocate for.

State:

- Call and ask for a public hearing about funding for Wisconsin Eye. The number is (608) 266-5300
- Request the funding administrative workers need to meet the new food share federal requirements from HR 1. Do this quickly to keep Wisconsin's state budget and error rates low.

Federal:

Ask important questions like:

- What will you do if the administration doesn't follow Congress's spending instructions?
- Will you agree on a federal 2026 budget, not a year-long continuing resolution? They are not the same.

Upcoming Events

Next PFW Staff/Team Meeting:

Monday, February 9th from
10:00 to 11:30 am.

PFW Board Meeting In-Person:

Wednesday, March 18th from
10:30 to 3:00 pm in Madison.

Disability Advocacy Day:

Thursday, March 19th in Madison

PFW Holidays (Office Closed):

- Martin Luther King Day: Jan. 19th
- Presidents' Day: Feb. 16th
- Memorial Day: May 25th
- Break for Independence Day: July 3rd & 4th
- Labor Day: Sept. 7th

Tips to Stay in Advocacy

- Set a small manageable goals--Instead of "Stop this bad bill", try "Make a 30 second call to my legislator 3 out of 5 days of the work week."
- Look for small wins--It can be anything! From getting dressed instead of staying in pajamas, taking a shower, working out, to eating one vegetable.
- Name one positive thing that happened today--For example, the sun came out today, my bus came on time, I woke up with my health, fuzzy socks etc.