

PEOPLE FIRST WISCONSIN SUMMER 2026

www.peoplefirstwisconsin.org
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A Word From Cindy:

As you know, I've been training for one year for the Special Olympics National Games. It all started last year at the 2025 Selection Camp, where I was selected to play volleyball for Team Wisconsin at the U.S.A. Games in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



Cindy Bentley joins her teammates on a chartered bus to Minneapolis for the Special Olympics USA Games in June.

When the big day, June 19th, finally got here, we left early in the morning on a coach bus to start our journey. We picked up the athletes in Madison and then in Eau Claire, where they had an official send-off to Minneapolis. We got settled into our dorm at the University of Minnesota in the late afternoon and enjoyed a welcome party.

The next day, we went to a Special Olympics program called “Healthy Athletes,” which is held at competitions to address the unmet needs of athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This program has doctors and therapists who screen and provide referrals for Audiology (hearing), Dentistry, Prevention and Nutrition, Emotional Health, Physical Therapy (balance and strength), and Podiatry (healthy feet). After that, we worked out.

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A Word From Cindy:

On Monday and Tuesday, we played “seeding “ games against teams from Alabama, New York, New Jersey, and Texas. Seeding is when they compare your team’s performance against other teams. They did this so that we would be in a division with teams with similar skills when we competed in regular games. Then we started regular play, beat all the teams in our division, and brought home the Gold!

I had never gotten a gold medal in the U.S.A. Games before. I had gotten silver and bronze medals, but this was so super cool: getting a gold medal at the Special Olympics National Games. Another highlight was meeting with Tim Shriver, who offered me an opportunity to work on a project with him. His mom was Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who started Special Olympics, and he is the Chairman of Special Olympics International.



Team Wisconsin celebrates its gold medal win for volleyball. (Photo courtesy of Chad Hershner, Special Olympics Wisconsin.)

I had the most wonderful time of my life, and I remember to never take life or the opportunities you have for granted, because you never know what good things could happen. In closing, I just want to say, as I always say, that I love you and have a great day!

Love, Cindy

Speaking up for our rights!
By: Erin Miller

The DOJ memo about the Olmstead/ Act: What does it say?

The Justice Department released a memo questioning the right of people with disabilities to get care at home or in the community. The memo does not change the law, but it could affect whether the law is enforced. With Medicaid cuts, many in the disability community could lose the support they need to live in their own homes and may be forced into institutions. Your ongoing voice and presence are vital—every effort counts. We have a say in how we live our lives.

Here are some talking points you could use when talking to your legislators:

- People with disabilities should not be forced into nursing homes, psychiatric facilities, or institutions when they can live safely in the community.
- Community care usually costs less than institutional care. In Wisconsin, programs like Family Care, IRIS, and CLTS cost about \$4,000 to \$4,500 a month. A private nursing home can cost about \$10,000 a month. Some institutions can cost more than \$45,000 a month.
- Freedom and independence should include the disability community. We should be able to have our own homes, make our own choices, decide what to eat, and be treated with respect. Protecting community-based care is essential to maintaining these rights. Without ADA's integration mandate, I could lose these parts of my independent, rich, full life: for example, having the key to my own place, having no choice about what I want for breakfast today, and having to put up with baby talk every day. I want to do more things for myself!
- Historically, we've had no choice but to work pennies on the dollar if we want to work. I want to choose what kind of work I do, and get paid the same as non-disabled people. We have bills to pay, too! People with disabilities should have the chance to work regular jobs, get paid fairly, and choose the kind of work they want to do.

We want to live in our communities. We deserve freedom, choices, and respect. Advocacy is a marathon, not a sprint. Small daily actions and taking breaks when needed help us stay strong. Keep up the fight!

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What PFW Has Been Doing By: Meara Holmberg

Things at PFW have been busy lately. Members met in-person for our March Board Meeting in Madison. This was followed by Disability Advocacy Day (DAD), an event where people with disabilities go to the Capitol to meet with their legislators to discuss issues that matter to them, like voting, caregiving, and transportation. In May, Governor Evers invited Special Olympics athletes (including PFW Members) to his mansion for a celebration of their achievements. Looking ahead, we're all excited for Disability Pride Month in July and the Self-Determination Conference (SDC) in October.



Cindy Bentley & Stacey Ellington at the Governor's Mansion



PFW March Board Meeting



Josh Gretebeck & Cindy Bentley at the Governor's Mansion for Special Olympics



Sam Lenz shakes hands with Tony Evers



PFW Members enjoy the Governor's Mansion

Ben Gapinski talks to Tony Evers


Safety in the Summer

By: Priscilla Battle

Safety in the sun and heat

- 
- Drink lots of water
 - Take breaks to cool down
 - Wear thin loose clothes
 - Use sunscreen to prevent sunburn

Outdoor Safety

- 
- Be careful on park slides, swings and equipment can cause burns.
 - While riding bikes, scooters or skates wear a helmet.

Car Safety



- Do not leave people or pets in the car, it gets very hot fast.

Safety in the water




Be sure to not swim alone

Wear a life jacket if you can't swim well. Young children should wear life jackets.

Wear a life jacket when riding in a boat or skiing.

Wear waterproof sunscreen and reapply it every hour when swimming.



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DISABILITY PRIDE & UPCOMING EVENTS BY: THE PFW NEWSLETTER TEAM



Upcoming Events

Upcoming Holidays (PFW will be closed):

Friday, July 3rd & Saturday, July 4th

Labor Day: Monday, September 7th

Disability Pride Festival

12-5 PM, Saturday, July 25, 2026,
Warner Park

2026 Self-Determination Conference

October 19-21, 2026

The Power of Self-Determination:
Technology, Community, & You

Virtual PFW Board Meetings

Tuesday, September 15th and
Tuesday, December 15th, from
10:00 am-11:30 am



Fun Things to Do:

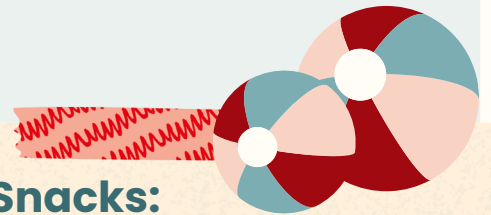
Spend time on the water or at the beach.

Take nature walks or garden

Stargazing & camping

Go to the movies, concerts, or farmers' markets

Plan a day trip or weekend getaway



Summer Snacks:

Paleta (Mexican Popsicle)

Ice Cream

Watermelon

Popcorn

Strawberry Rhubarb Pie

Frozen Coke

Margarita

Wine Spritzer and Frose

**Remember,
Registration for the
Self-Determination
Conference is open!
Click the link to
register.**