

# family ties

Wisconsin's family  
voice for children's  
mental health

Fall 2008

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## Announcing the 2008 Children Come First Conference

**W**isconsin Family Ties is pleased to announce that the 2008 Children Come First (CCF) Conference, Wisconsin's child and adolescent behavioral health conference, will be held at the Kalahari Resort & Conference Center in Wisconsin Dells on November 9th -11th.

If you've attended a CCF Conference before, you'll see some exciting changes. The conference format and schedules have a new look, plus we've added built-in networking and recreational opportunities. This conference is value packed and reasonably priced. All meals are included in the registration fee!

The event will begin on Sunday, November 9, with a relaxing day for all attendees. Families and other conference goers will be able to enjoy the Kalahari Indoor Water Park, attend an indoor tailgate party and chill with the Figureheads, the award winning hip hop music sensation. This day is included in the conference fee (see registration form on page 6 for fee schedule).

You may want to consider bringing your son or daughter with you. Youth ages six and older may participate in the Youth Track. Through use of art, writing, multimedia and movement, children and youth will embark on a journey of self-discovery, self-expression and social connectedness. At conference end, parents and adult attendees will be treated to a presentation that is prepared entirely by youth.

The conference theme this year is "Finding What Works." There could be no title that more aptly describes what we all need – parents and child-serving professionals alike. Children and youth with emotional or behavioral disorders need all who work with them to have strategies, therapies, medications and natural supports that help them to become more resilient, and to live happier, healthier lives.

The CCF conference will feature three keynote addresses and 30 different workshops that follow four main themes:

- Assessment and evaluation
- Advocacy
- Evidence-based practices
- New and innovative approaches

For a full conference brochure – including information for families who may need financial assistance to attend, visit [www.wifamilyties.org](http://www.wifamilyties.org) or call Wisconsin Family Ties at 800-422-7145.

Special room rates at the Kalahari Resort are available to those attending the CCF conference; see the registration form in this newsletter for details.

So, what can you expect from the 2008 CCF conference? You can expect to learn from top-notch workshops, be inspired by personal stories, and get connected with others. You can enjoy the many fun activities planned and recharge your batteries in a relaxing setting. We're confident the CCF conference will be welcoming to anyone caring for, working with or interested in the wellbeing of children with mental, emotional or behavioral disorders. We hope you'll join us.

For further information about the Children Come First Conference, contact Deenah Givens at 608-267-6800, [deenahmarie@gmail.com](mailto:deenahmarie@gmail.com), or Eleanor McEntee at 800-422-7145, [eleanor@wifamilyties.org](mailto:eleanor@wifamilyties.org).

### Children Come First Conference Highlights

#### Monday Keynote Presentation

**"How Harley Davidson Saved Me From the Asylum"** by Pete Feigal

Pete Feigal was diagnosed at 12 with major depression, and was locked away in a closed mental hospital for a year at 15. After returning home, the perceived pity and shame of his school and community drove him to leave at 17 and he did not return home for almost 20 years.

In his keynote address, Pete shares both the insights of his 30 year struggle with mental illness and the gifts of wisdom that others have given him along the way. Pete's message is one of solutions, humor, compassion and hope.

#### Tuesday Lunch & Plenary Session

**"Surviving the Riptide of Mental Illness"** by Andy & Jer Werlein

Jer and Andy Werlein are a father and son who have an inspiring message of hope and determination. They will discuss depression and suicide from their individual perspectives. Andy, a young man who has struggled with bipolar disorder and has survived several suicide attempts, has presented at state conferences and school districts and was also featured in an ABC News special on mental illness in 2006.

This father and son team will pose ideas and strategies on accessing treatment and helping loved ones who feel adrift on a sea of depression and despair.

#### Tuesday Keynote Presentation

**"Finding What Works: One Jurisdiction's Journey"** By Dr. Antoinette Kavanaugh, PhD

Dr. Antoinette Kavanaugh has seen hundreds of youth with mental illness enter the juvenile justice system. Many young people with mental illness end up incarcerated partly because "systems do not talk to each other or, at least, not effectively." Hear how Cook County created the Court Clinic Model, how it positively changed outcomes and how the model can be adapted for use in other jurisdictions.

Antoinette Kavanaugh, a clinical psychologist specializing in adolescents, is co-director of the Cook County Juvenile Court Clinic (CCJCC). She holds a PhD in clinical psychology from Northwestern University, and has completed fellowships in Adolescent Psychology at Cook County Hospital and in Forensic Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center.

Continued on page 2

## Children Come First Conference Continued from page 1

### Care for the Caregiver – 2:00 – 4:00 PM, Sunday

Caring for yourself is one of the most important—and often one of the most neglected—things you can do as a caregiver. When your needs are taken care of, the person you care for will benefit, too. Come and enjoy mindfulness meditation, gentle-stretch yoga and more as you experience ways in which you can take care of yourself in this busy world.

### Kick Off Celebration with a special concert by Figureheads – 6:30 PM, Sunday

The Figureheads are an award-winning musical act turned non-profit organization using original positive hip-hop music to encourage youth and adults to develop critical thinking and collaborative skills that result in a greater desire to learn and relate. The Figureheads will perform songs about children's mental health from their recent CD, "Is Anyone Listening?"

Even if you think hip hop is "not your thing," stop by and check out what our youth are listening to. We guarantee you'll be moved.



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*family ties* newsletter, Editor  
Wisconsin Family Ties  
16 N. Carroll St., Suite 640  
Madison, WI 53703  
info@wifamilyties.org



### Touched by the Muses - 6:30 PM, Monday

The Tilting at Windmills theater company will use live drama, poetry and music to show how a large part of our culture has been defined by people who have struggled with mental illness / brain disorders. This exciting, hopeful, and joyful production uses the example of artists throughout history – from Michelangelo to Mozart to Monet to Mark Twain – to show that sadness, despair and pain are not all that is given with a mental ill-

ness: There is also the chance to see the world in unique, creative and heroic ways. Tilting at Windmills is a theater company for people with mental illness and their families and is based in the Twin Cities.

**Youth Track Presentation** after lunch on Tuesday

**Drawings for special prizes** - The CCF conference will end with drawings for many wonderful prizes!

## Children Come First Conference At a Glance

### Sunday, November 9, 2008

#### 11:00 am – 4:00 pm

Hotel Check In & Conference  
Registration & Water Park \*you can go through the pre-check-in at Kalahari; then, go to water park until your room is ready.

#### 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Networking & Self Care Event – Care for the Caregiver

#### 4:00 – 5:00 pm

Welcome & Opening Remarks

#### 5:00 – 6:30 pm

Tailgate Party!

#### 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Kick Off Celebration with a Concert by Figureheads

### Monday, November 10, 2008

#### 8:15 – 9:15 am

Registration for CCF Conference & Youth Track  
Continental Breakfast

#### 9:15 – 9:30 am

Opening Remarks

#### 9:30 – 10:30 am

Keynote Address by Pete Feigal

#### 10:30 – 10:45 am

Break

#### 10:45 – Noon

Session A Workshops

#### Noon – 1:30 pm

Lunch  
\*Youth Track participants will eat lunch separately

#### 1:30 – 2:45 pm

Session B Workshops

#### 2:45 – 3:00 pm

Break

#### 3:00 – 4:15 pm

Session C Workshops

#### 4:15 – 6:00 pm

Free Time

#### 6:00 – 7:00 pm

Buffet Dinner

#### 6:30 pm

Entertainment by Tilting At Windmills Theater Company

### Tuesday, November 11, 2008

#### 7:15 – 8:15 am

Registration & Continental Breakfast

#### 8:15 – 8:30 am

Opening Remarks

#### 8:30 – 9:30 am

Keynote Address by  
Dr. Antoinette Kavanaugh

#### 9:30 – 9:45 am

Break

#### 9:45 – 11:00 am

Session D Workshops

#### 11:00 – 11:15 am

Break

#### 11:15 am – 12:30 pm

Session E Workshops

#### 12:30 – 1:30 pm

Lunch and Plenary Session by  
Jer & Andy Werlein

#### 1:30 – 2:00 pm

Drawings & Youth Track Presentation

#### 2:00 pm

Closing Remarks

## Ann Hager 1957-2008

**A**nn Hager, longtime Wisconsin Family Ties advocate in La Crosse, WI, passed away on August 15, 2008, after a year-long battle with cancer. Ann faced her illness with courage, dignity, humor and feistiness – the same attributes she brought to her work as a family advocate.

Ann loved spending time with her five boys and husband most of all. Her other loves included pigs, horses, Basset Clowns (hounds), cooking, stargazing, flying airplanes, cross-stitching, stained-glass making, pink roses, being on the back of her husband's motorcycle, *Amtgard*, movies and reading.

She is survived by her husband, Michael, and sons, Ryan, 24, of St Paul, Tyler, 17, Wyll, 16, Skyley, 14, and Tryten, 11.

Ann worked passionately for children with differing abilities for the past 12 years as a senior family advocate with Wisconsin Family Ties. She worked with families in several western Wisconsin counties, but her reach extended much farther: Ann helped change public policy and legislation at the local, state and federal levels. She worked with counties, schools and the justice system for the betterment of children who have mental, emotional or behavioral disorders.

A celebration of Ann's life was held on August 24th at Grandad Park overlooking La Crosse. Ann was remembered by many speakers, including WFT's executive director, who delivered the following eulogy.

Ann Hager was an amazing person. She often referred to herself as feisty, which was a badge she proudly wore. But when I think of her, I'm most drawn to her compassion.

She believed there was no higher calling than to help others. Over the years, she directly supported hundreds of families that include children with mental, emotional or behavioral disorders; through trainings, presentations and mentoring others, she touched thousands. She fought tirelessly to improve services and supports for Wisconsin families. She was a very open person, willing to share what was going on in her own life. She did this not to draw attention to herself nor to receive pity, but simply to let others know that they were not alone in their struggles.



She was never afraid to speak out on behalf of children and families and often made quite an impression when she did. Here are two examples. The first was sent about a year ago from a worker at one of the state's mental health institutes.

"I just had to contact you regarding Ann Hager's involvement with a family who has a child placed at Winnebago Mental Health Institute. The child is from a more rural area and the county has been less than responsive in arranging much needed services to support her following discharge from [Winnebago]. Ann became involved with the

child's grandmother who is her guardian. During a staffing yesterday, Ann challenged the county in a professional yet firm manner when they showed hesitancy in providing services for this child. I know our team feels a great deal of gratitude towards Ann and Wisconsin Family Ties for the advocacy that has been offered to this family."

The second was sent just this week from a longtime juvenile justice worker who served on an advisory committee with Ann.

"My memories of Ann are those of someone who combined a sense of passion and zeal in advocating for parents and children alike in a way that simply made me listen and learn. She demonstrated a respect for those she was educating in a way that simply made me *want* to listen and learn. I learned a lot from Ann, as I'm sure many did, and her presence and voice for others will surely be missed."

Ann was quite successful in her efforts and received many accolades. In 2003, she received the Children Come First Award given to a family member who has embodied the principles of collaborative systems of care; in 2007, she received the Children Come First Award for outstanding achievement in advocacy.

So, how can we best honor Ann's life?

Well, I'm pretty sure if Ann was here, she would issue us a challenge.

She would challenge us to **better understand** children with mental health needs and their families. She would remind us that these wonderful and amazing children are not defined by their diagnoses, but have tremendous gifts and talents to share with the world. She would urge us to show acceptance to their families, who are often isolated and shunned by society. She would tell us that these families are doing the best they can, given the resources they have and supports available to them.

She would challenge us to **get involved**. To Ann, it was not enough to cheer along the sidelines; you have to get in the game. When you see things you would like changed, take action. Write your local newspaper, call your legislators, organize a rally. It doesn't matter

### Ann Hager Memorial Fund Established

Wisconsin Family Ties has established a fund in memory of Ann Hager to assist families who have children with mental health needs. In accordance with Ann's wishes, this fund will have two purposes: 1) to help defray transportation costs for families to visit their children who are at residential treatment centers or a juvenile corrections facility; and 2) to provide financial assistance for families to attend WFT's annual Family Fun Day. Donations to the Ann Hager Memorial Fund may be sent to Wisconsin Family Ties Inc., 16 N. Carroll St., Suite 640, Madison, WI 53703.

## Amy Buys Roses

By Pete Feigal

Every month, when her disability check comes, Amy buys a single, long-stemmed red rose. It costs \$2.93. It's very precious to her, a luxury purchase, because after her rent and utilities are paid, she has \$84 dollars to live on for the next 30 days. Out of that \$84 a month has to come food, clothes, shampoo, haircuts, shoe laces, stamps, toilet paper, everything. She calculated it once: \$84 a month times twelve months, divided by three hundred and sixty five days. That leaves her with a grand total of \$2.76 a day to survive on, in 2003 with a terrible chronic illness. She carries the rose home under her coat, to protect it from the cold. She smells it, studies its deep color, feels the sharpness of its thorns. She nurtures it like a child, trims its stem, keeps it alive as long as she can.

She misses her car, but she can't afford it. She can't afford contact lenses anymore. She wears the cheap frames the county pays for. She jokingly calls them her "welder's glasses."

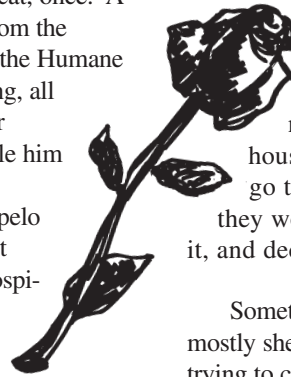
Her teeth are chipped and broken. Her disability pays for basic dental work, but the last "welfare dentist" she saw pulled six of her teeth at one time, rather than put the extra time or expense into working on them. Now she's gun shy. She thinks she is becoming like the old cars in her neighborhood. Dented fenders, rust, missing hubcaps.

She doesn't go out very much. One of the side effects of her medications is weight

gain, and with only \$84 a month, it's hard to get clothes that fit. She goes clothes shopping twice a year at Savers or The Salvation Army. She got a good winter coat when her church had a clothes drive, but she needs gloves.

She doesn't have people over very often. Her tiny one-room efficiency is in the worst part of town and doesn't even have room for a kitchen table. She dreams of a house with more than one room, with space for books. And a bathtub she could actually straighten out her legs in. A kitchen table. A garden of her own. She jokes that the only land she'll ever own will be six feet deep.

She has no child. She had a cat, once. A big yellow tabby called "Jude" from the Beatles song. She found Jude in the Humane Society as a tiny kitten, all dancing, all animation. They raised each other through 10 full years. She'd cradle him like a baby and sing to him. Van Morrison. "You're as sweet as tupelo honey. You're an angel of the first degree." When her depression hospitalized and finally disabled her, Jude was taken back to the Humane Society. Though he was frightened, and sad, Jude tried to dance behind the bars again, to be all animation, so that maybe Amy would want him again, even though he was old and achy now. Jude danced as hard as he could for three days and then was put to sleep. The apartment where Amy now lives doesn't allow pets.



She doesn't go to church very often; she's embarrassed when the collection plate comes around. But she still believes; if anything her faith is stronger than ever. She thinks the story of Job got it wrong: When you take away everything from someone, sometimes that's when they feel the most need for God. The Devil should have made Job an NBA star, made him wealthy and wanted, that's when his faith would have been really tested. She's afraid she's forgotten how to pray, but she still has one prayer left, and she says it at each meal and at the end of each day. "Thank you."

She has yearly holiday traditions. She watches "It's A Wonderful Life" and cries at the same parts she did last year, and twenty years ago. She reads "A Christmas Carol" with new insights: "Are there no prisons? Are there no work houses?," says Scrooge. Many can't go there; many would rather die. If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

Sometimes she feels she's being tested, but mostly she doesn't. She writes in her journal, trying to chart her own disease, feeling that maybe, somehow, she'll come up with something important that will help others with depression somewhere down the line. But it's hard to do when she's so tired all the time. She feels she'd give anything just to be held, to be touched, to have her hair stroked.

*Continued on page 7*

## Ann Hager *Continued from page 3*

if there are insurmountable odds; there's value in taking the first step. Ann lived out one of my favorite quotes, from Dr. Benjamin Mays, who was a social activist and president of Morehouse College:

"The tragedy of life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach. It isn't a calamity to die with dreams unfulfilled, but it is a calamity not to dream. It is not a disgrace not to reach the stars, but it is a disgrace to have no stars to reach for. Not failure, but low aim, is sin."

Finally, I believe Ann would challenge us to **be generous** with all we've been given.

Seek out opportunities to be generous. If you see a family in need, give them your time, perhaps a meal, or a ride if they need transportation. Say something encouraging and uplifting. Give, no matter how little, to groups that are working to improve the lives of children and families.

I don't think it's a secret that Ann wasn't given a lot of material things on this earth. But she was incredibly generous with what she had. In a world that measures success by what you have, rather than who you are, Ann probably wouldn't have measured up. But that's a rather shallow definition. A far superior description of success was pro-

vided by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said:

"To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded."

By this definition, Ann Hager was one of the most successful people I have known.

# Children Come First Conference Registration

Please use one form per person. Duplicate as needed or download at [www.wifamilyties.org](http://www.wifamilyties.org).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: H: \_\_\_\_\_ W: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please print clearly.*

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2008

## Conference Highlights

### Sunday, November 9, 2008

10A – 4P Conference Registration & Water Park Time  
 2-4P Networking Event  
 "Self Care for the Busy Person/Professional"  
 7P Concert Performance by Figureheads!

### Monday & Tuesday Nov 10 & 11

30 Workshops to choose from &  
 Youth Track for youth 6 – 18 yrs old

### Monday, November 10

Keynote by Pete Feigal  
 Tilting At Windmills Theater Company Performs!

### Tuesday, November 11

Keynotes by Dr. Antoinette Kavanaugh &  
 The Werlein Family

### Exhibits

Monday, November 10: 8:00 am – 6:00 pm  
 Tuesday, November 11: 8:00 am - 2:00 pm

### Role: *(Please check all that apply)*

I am a:

- Administrator
- Advocate
- Community Leader
- Counselor
- Educator
- Nurse
- Paraprofessional
- Parent/Grandparent/Foster Parent
- Policymaker
- Psychiatrist/Physician
- Psychologist
- Religious/Lay Leader
- Therapist
- Social Worker
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

I work in:

- Church/Religious Organization
- Corrections
- Education
- Health Care
- Mental Health
- Legislative
- Social Services
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# Children Come First Conference Registration

## Kalahari Resort Hotel Fees *(state rates apply)*

Single – \$70.00/night; 2-4 people in a room – \$99.00/night

Each additional person is \$20 per night

### You are responsible for making your hotel reservations!

Call Kalahari Resort & Conference Center at 877.254.5466 and tell them you are part of the Children Come First Conference to get the reduced room rate!

**Must call by Friday, October 17, 2008.**

### Conference Fees (please check appropriate registration type)

	Full Conference	2 Days	1 Day
<b>Parent:</b>	__ \$120	__ \$95	__ \$70
<b>Student:</b>	__ \$125	__ \$100	__ \$75
<b>All Others:</b>	__ \$175	__ \$140	__ \$100
<b>Youth Track:</b>	__ \$25	__ \$25	__ \$25

### Please Check which days you will be in attendance

\_\_ Sunday    \_\_ Monday    \_\_ Tuesday

### Conference Meals

All meals during the conference are included in the price of registration!

Please check which type of meal you would like:    \_\_ Standard    \_\_ Vegetarian

<p>Make checks payable to WFT  Enclose Registration Form, payment by check and mail to:  <b>WFT - 16 N Carroll Street, Ste 640, Madison, WI 53703</b>  Attn: Deenah</p>
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Cancellation Policy: Conference Registration fee minus a \$50 Admin fee per registration will be refunded if cancellation is made in writing by Friday, 10/24/08. No exceptions.

**Questions: Call Deenah at 608.267.6800**

**Youth Track:** Please fill out information below to register your child(ren) ages 6–18 for the Youth Track.

\*We will send you a questionnaire to complete and return upon receipt of this information.

Name and age \_\_\_\_\_

Name and age \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# Grand Adventure at Wisconsin Family Ties' 13th Annual Family Fun Day

By Regina Petersen, WFT Family Advocate

Over 850 people made their way to Mount Olympus Water & Theme Park in Wisconsin Dells for our annual Family Fun Day on July 8, 2008. This year families were offered an extra bonus: Full access to the entire water and theme park for the day!

Upon entering the park with sunscreen and towels in hand, family members received their wrist bands and maps and were off on a

stimulating and carefree adventure. The journey began with a winding path into the Outdoor Theme Park that continued on to the Water Park. Families and children of all ages enjoyed spending the day on roller coasters, go carts, water slides, raft rides, and wave pools – not to mention the adult-favorite lazy river ride! Lunch was served in the new group shelter area which provided ample space to spread out, enjoy the shade and relax before resuming the more active pleasures of the park in the afternoon. The day was filled with excitement, adventure and bonding for the entire family.

Families clearly enjoyed the day, as proven by many positive comments, including:

*"We had a great time! It was a nice surprise we could use the entire park."*

*"Our family really enjoyed spending the day together."*

*"We are so grateful to WFT for providing this great day for our family at a price we can afford."*

*"This outing was our family's only chance to spend the day at a water park all summer...Thank you!"*

Thank you to all who attended this year's Family Fun Day and to our friends at Mount Olympus. It was my first experience and I had a wonderful time! We hope you'll plan to join us again next summer.



## Has Your Child Been Restrained or Secluded?

The use of seclusion and restraint to address behavioral issues in schools and treatment facilities has been an issue of concern in Wisconsin for some time. Three advocacy agencies – Wisconsin Family Ties, Disability Rights Wisconsin, and Wisconsin FACETS – have formed a coalition to influence policy and practice related to seclusion and restraint. The coalition wants to address this at a state level using data collected from families who have a child that has experienced seclusion and/or restraint techniques.

If your child has been secluded or restrained in any setting, you may wish to complete a survey being conducted by the coalition. Please note that you have the option whether or not the information you provide is kept confidential.

By conducting this survey, we hope to start collecting stories to better understand the experiences you, your child and others have faced. We are hoping that these stories will help us create awareness and impact legislation about the appropriate use of seclusion and restraint techniques.

If you are interested in completing a survey, please contact Wisconsin Family Ties at 800-422-7145 or visit the WFT website at [www.wifamilyties.org](http://www.wifamilyties.org).

## Amy *Continued from page 4*

She doesn't go to the drop-in center. She functions at a higher level than the people there, but can't quite make it in the "normal" world, either.

She has a hard time thinking and saying nice things about herself. She doesn't think she is beautiful. She's afraid she has "welfare eyes." But she tries to be a good person. She tries to say something kind to everyone she meets. She tries to see the humor in life. She has hope and dreams. She thanks God every night for his blessings and his love. She thanks him for the gift of her life. She

believes her soul is a beautiful rose. She thinks it's her greatest secret.

At the beginning of every month, when her disability check comes, Amy buys a rose, and at the end of every day, she says her only prayer.

*Pete Feigal, a mental health advocate and inspirational speaker who has battled clinical depression for more than three decades, will present a keynote address at the 2008 Children Come First Conference on November 10, 2008.*

## WFT Marks 20 Years of “Celebrating Every Child’s Gifts”

By Deenah Givens

On Saturday, April 12, 2008, Wisconsin Family Ties celebrated twenty years of dedicated service to families throughout Wisconsin. The celebration, entitled “Celebrating Every Child’s Gifts,” brought together 300 people of all ages; from the original founding members to the families, staff, volunteers, collaborators, and funders who have kept Wisconsin Family Ties actively involved in changing people’s lives since 1987.

The celebration was held at the Middleton Performing Arts Center and was a day of art, food, music, entertainment, fun, socializing and much more! Many people worked to make the day a great success, dozens of people came to volunteer, and food from over twenty-five vendors was served throughout the day.

The day started off with an art project facilitated by local artist and Shorewood Elementary School art teacher, Michele

Hatchell. Michele led about one hundred children, youth and adults in adorning quilt pieces that answered the question – What is your story or what is special about you? The laughter and joy around that very long table full to the brim with art supplies made it quite evident that everyone was truly enjoying letting their creative side out to play!

Art created by WFT children and youth decorated the interior of the performing arts center and local musician and children’s performing artist Rich Baumann was a roving minstrel performing tunes such as All My Feelings and My Brother Eats Bugs! He was surrounded by his own adoring fans as he let the children pluck at his guitar, which evoked huge smiles from everyone!

Jonathan Garber, WFT board member and yoga instructor, led fifty children, youth and adults in a half-hour of movement activities that had everyone in the room spell-bound and enjoying stretching their bodies and minds in new and wonderful ways as they practiced their new yoga poses!

While all of the activities were going on, many people mingled and socialized in the foyer, catching up with old and dear friends and coworkers or meeting new friends.

The celebration culminated in an awards presentation to the individuals who founded Wisconsin Family Ties. The presentation of awards was followed by a concert by the Figureheads, who debuted five new songs and performed some of their old favorites for the crowd too. They invited audience members (of all ages) to join them on stage to sing and dance to their favorite Figureheads tunes – which we did without much prodding!

So, here’s to the next twenty years! May it be as successful as the first and may the lives of Wisconsin families continue to be enriched by the services that WFT staff, volunteers, board, and others provide, and may we continue to support one another and to be supported by each of you!

**Wisconsin Family Ties would like to extend a big thank you to all of the businesses, volunteers, community members, board, staff, and families who helped to make our 20th anniversary celebration a successful event. THANK YOU!!!**

**Thank you to the following businesses and individuals for their generous financial contributions!**

Knupp & Watson, Inc.  
Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities  
Capitol Insurance Companies  
American Family Insurance  
Mortenson, Matzelle & Meldrum, Inc.  
Wegner CPAs  
Rural Mutual Insurance - Bill Jensen Agency  
Bodilly CPAs & Consultants, LLP  
Disability Rights Wisconsin  
Innovative Financial, Inc.  
CUNA Mutual Group  
NAMI Wisconsin  
White Pine Consulting Service, Inc.  
Wisconsin Council on Children & Families  
Grassroots Empowerment Project  
Mental Health America of Wisconsin  
J.L. Bronsdon  
Rich & Debbie Courtois  
Mary Davis  
Dennis & Ann Dornfeld  
John Easterday  
Boyd & Valerie Erdman  
Dianne Greenley  
Bill & Joanne Griesbach  
Jennie Lowenberg

Howard Mandeville  
Lydia Maurer  
Joan Maynard  
Patrick & Kathleen McLaughlin  
Clifford Meldman  
Joseph Perron  
Ralph Schlitz  
Laura Shaffer

**Thanks to the following businesses for contributing goods and services.**

Bagels Forever  
Biaggi’s  
Bleu Mont Dairy Company  
Blooms Flower Shop  
Boston’s – The Gourmet Pizza  
Brennan’s Country Market  
Cabibbo’s Bakery  
Caribou Coffee  
Clary’s Gourmet Popcorn  
Copp’s – Junction Road & Shorewood Hills  
Einstein’s Bagels  
Fountain Prairie Inn & Farms  
Glass Nickel Pizza, East  
Hook’s Cheese Company, Inc.  
Kitchen Hearth  
McDonalds – Greenway Cross  
Milio’s

Mount Olympus Water & Theme Park  
Noodles, Monona Drive  
Paradise Printing Company  
Pecatonica Valley Farm  
Pedro’s, East  
Perkins Restaurant & Bakery  
Pizza Hut  
Pizza Pit  
Prologoz  
Rocky Rococo Pizza & Pasta  
Sylvan Meadows  
Whole Foods Market

**Finally, we would like to extend a big thank you to the numerous volunteers, staff, musicians, artists and others who also helped to make this event a fun-filled day for all!**

WFT Staff and Board Members  
Deenah Givens, Event Coordinator  
Dawn Wians, Artist and Event Design  
Sue Ossman, Food Coordinator  
Rich Baumann, Performing Artist  
Michele Hatchell, Artist  
Michele Davis, On-site assistance (and lots of it!)  
Jonathan Garber, Yoga Instructor  
Wisconsin Presbytery Youth Group Members  
Performing Arts Center Staff - Chris, Patrick & Bolla  
And, finally, the Figureheads!

## Founders of Wisconsin Family Ties

*In June of 1987, a group of 40 parents representing nine Wisconsin support groups met in Wisconsin Rapids and voted to form a statewide organization. The following month, a steering committee of 16 parents met to form an organizational framework. At that meeting, the first officers of the organization were elected. The organization was named “Wisconsin Family Ties.”*

*The following individuals were instrumental in the forming of Wisconsin Family Ties and were honored at WFT’s 20th anniversary event, “Celebrating Every Child’s Gifts.”*

**Cindy Fahlstrom:** Cindy got involved when she “put her hand in the air” at the Wisconsin Rapids meeting in 1987. A lasting memory she has is of the realization that “there were a lot more parents out there than we thought,” which she called “an ‘aha’ moment every time we got together.” Cindy relates, “We realized there was strength in numbers and we could make a difference.” She hopes WFT continues to be run by parents at all levels of the organization.

**Joanne Griesbach:** Joanne was the first president of WFT and a driving force in establishing the organization. She remembers the first meeting and how members of the group supported each other. She also recalled the fairly uncommon experience of parents being “treated respectfully and being given credit for their expertise.” She hopes that WFT can add more family advocates and “continue to support parents.”

**Oren Hammes:** Oren provided technical assistance to the fledgling organization through the state Office of Mental Health and later become a WFT board member. He states, “One of the most meaningful and gratifying memories was [witnessing first-hand] the support parents gave to one another.”

er.” He envisions a day when WFT has support groups in all counties.

**Dee Lawrence Hoff:** Dee edited the newsletter and was a key contributor to WFT’s Madison support group in the early days. A striking memory for her was “discovering all the parents who had no support.” She hopes that WFT can push for “more early intervention and support for families so children can stay at home, become successful and be happy.”

**Maureen Jensen:** Maureen pulled together focus groups of families who had children with unmet emotional needs in an effort to identify ways to improve services to these children and their families. She recalls “the commitment of incredibly creative people who, regardless of what was going on at the homefront, would still gather to meet to create a statewide network.” Her hope for WFT is “that it would absolutely have a stronger and stronger presence and continue its strong support to families.”

**Beth Anne Kealiher:** Beth Anne designed WFT’s logo and was a writer of the organization’s first grant application. She remembers “how excited we all were; how we wanted to change the world.” She stated, “We wanted to change people’s minds about mental illness and stigma. We wanted our children treated with respect, and for others to acknowledge their strengths.”

**Howard Mandeville:** Howard helped organize parents as the coordinator of AMI (now NAMI) Wisconsin’s Child Advocacy Project. He remembers the talent and energy of the parents who came together to form WFT. He was impressed “how people with private concerns went beyond their own troubles and focused on the public benefit of organizing systems of support that made sense to families.” He hopes WFT continues to sup-

port families so their children with mental health needs can stay in the community.

**Maggie Mezera:** Maggie was the first executive director of Wisconsin Family Ties and worked for the organization for 15 years. She fondly recalls the close friendships that developed among the people working to found the organization. She hopes that Wisconsin Family Ties “continues to help and support families in the special way that only WFT can.”

**Pattie Peterson:** Pattie attended the organizing meeting in Wisconsin Rapids and was struck by the “commitment, camaraderie, and connection” of all who attended. She recalled the feeling of support and the realization by all that they were “not alone.” Pattie hopes that WFT can “go forever and continue to change the world view of children with mental illness.”

**Suda Schaffer:** Suda was elected as the first secretary of WFT and helped create the organization’s bylaws. As secretary, she recorded the minutes of board meetings. She remembers how “we helped one another as we were growing to become an organization, and how that helped us with our own children and families.” Suda hopes that WFT continues to grow because it was helpful to her when her son was young. “I hope it continues to help many more families.”

**Ralph Schlitz:** Ralph attended the Wisconsin Rapids meeting and became the first treasurer of WFT. He fondly remembered the commitment of all who were involved in forming the organization. “We were all willing to show up, despite the demands of our family lives. When there was a meeting, we were there.” His wish is that WFT “continues to serve families who have children with mental health needs and help their kids successfully transition to adulthood.”

# family ties

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*Wisconsin Family Ties (WFT) is a statewide organization run by families for families that include children and adolescents with mental, emotional, behavioral or substance abuse disorders. An Equal Opportunity Employer, WFT is funded by individuals, corporations, grants, and allocations from Community Shares of Wisconsin and Northwoods United Way. Contributions to WFT are tax deductible.*

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