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Lynn Carus



*Advocacy to Me*

My name is Lynn Carus. I'm a self-advocate from the Milwaukee area and a former board member for the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD)! I grew up with my mom and grandma around the town of Glendale. I went to Nicolet High school until the middle of my junior year when I moved to Milwaukee and finished high school at Alexander Hamilton High School in 1999. I wasn't happy about changing schools when I was so close to graduating but I was excited to meet new people because I've always been such a social person. When I was in high school I wanted to get my drivers license but my mom said that I couldn't so I learned how to ride the city bus when I was 14 so by now I am a certified pro and can make my way all around the MKE area by myself. I also had to learn how to use the Badger Bus during my time on the WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities because I had to get from Milwaukee to Madison.

I had a great relationship with my special education teacher. She was like my school mom and I could go to her for help with anything. I think my interest in advocacy started when I was in high school. I was having issues with the principal and had to learn to stick up for myself as a teenager. After high school I lived at a couple of facilities for people with disabilities and other than the people I lived with, I don't have a lot of fond memories from these places. By this time, I had learned about Self-

Determination, so I knew how to stand up for what I wanted in my life. Because of this I was firm in how I wanted to be treated so I had no problem working with other residents to fight for better treatment and to be seen as the adults we are!

Shortly after, I moved into a group home and lived there for a few years until I moved into an apartment on my own, with some supports to help me. I love doing things on my own and couldn't imagine having people tell me what I can do or not do. I am currently living with a friend and just had to move during this pandemic which was stressful but I'm so happy to be living with a friend.

I got involved with advocacy work through People First WI. Somebody told me to get in touch with Cindy Bentley, so I did and then I met Mary Clare Carlson. After meeting Cindy while she was on the BPDD board she invited me to an event that BPDD was hosting. Cindy suggested that I apply for the board and I was accepted and served for 8 years, until 2019.

Advocacy for me is helping others who can't speak for themselves or can't attend things in person. I'm a very social person so it makes sense that one of my favorite things to do going to Disability Advocacy Day and other advocacy events every year.