



*The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force is committed to being a leader in identifying issues faced by all people affected by mental illness, facilitating improvements in mental health services, giving consumers and families a strong voice, reducing stigma, and implementing recovery principles.*

## **Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force 2021 Awards: Call for Nominations**

The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force is seeking nominations for the following awards:

### **Karen Avery Award:**

- Annually recognizes an individual whose work and values align with the legacy of Karen Avery, who was a respected and beloved leader in the mental health consumer/ survivor movement, and a champion for the rights of people with mental illness and for a strong consumer voice.
- Nominations should explain how the nominee has advanced the rights and independence of people with mental illness or other disabilities. Nominations may also address any work to support and advance the peer movement and elevate the voices of peers.

### **Marie C. Perry Rising Leader Award:**

- Inspired by the dedication of our inaugural recipient, the Marie C. Perry Rising Leader Award honors Marie's memory and recognizes visionary leadership by an individual who is a rising and/or young leader in the Milwaukee area mental health community.
- Nominations should explain how the nominee has demonstrated outstanding leadership to advance mental health and recovery values in our community. This may include one or more of the following: visionary leadership, providing outstanding service, effective advocacy, teaching and mentoring, and/or an ability to inspire others to excel in this work.
- The recipient receives an \$800 scholarship for conference registration, fees, and logistics or continuing education to further their own professional development in the field of health and human services.

### **Nominating Procedure**

- To submit a nomination, complete the respective form using these SurveyMonkey links:  
Karen Avery Award: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KWL72VT>  
Marie C. Perry Rising Leader Award: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KXS3XBJ>
- **Deadline: Nominations are due by noon on Monday August 9.** If you have questions or require an alternative format, contact Barbara Beckert at [barbara.beckert@drwi.org](mailto:barbara.beckert@drwi.org) or 414-292-2724.
- Awards will be presented at the 8th annual ***Karen Avery Forum***, Tuesday September 14th. The forum theme is ***Celebrating Recovery, Ending Stigma, Embracing Possibilities***.
- Preference will be given to nominees from Milwaukee County and/or whose work has had a positive impact in Milwaukee County, given the mission of the Task Force.

## About Karen Avery

Karen Avery was an advocate, a mentor, a peer, friend, and leader in the fight for disability rights, dedicated to giving power and independence to people with disabilities. She began her career as an advocate for fair housing, before joining *IndependenceFirst* in 1998 as Associate Director. She was known as an advocate extraordinaire, not only in Milwaukee, and Wisconsin, but nationally and even internationally. She was a respected leader in the mental health consumer/ survivor movement, working to advance the rights of people with mental illness and to ensure a strong consumer voice. Karen was a founding board member of the Grassroots Empowerment Project, and a leader in the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force, where she was a longtime member of the Steering Committee. She spoke about the system and about recovery with such impact and conviction, because she lived it. She was generous in sharing the challenges of her experience with mental illness and her recovery journey.

In her work as a leader in the disability movement, as well as to friends and family, Karen set the standard for being "selfless to a fault." She gave everything – her intellect, corny sense of humor, time, attention, empathy, kindness, authenticity, love of family, wonderful laugh, zest for life with a bit of indignation. Karen never wanted to be the center of attention in the public eye, but she was willing to speak truth to power to advance the rights of her peers – and, even more impactful, to mentor and encourage others in finding their voice. Karen was also an incredibly loving and caring Mother and Grandmother, and a dear friend and mentor to so many. When Karen passed away in 2013, the disability community lost a champion. The Milwaukee, Mental Health Task Force established this award to honor Karen's legacy and her deep commitment to advancing the rights of people with disabilities, and to the mental health consumer movement.

## Karen Avery Award recipients:

- 2014: Phillip Corona, Independent Living Services Coordinator, *IndependenceFirst*, Certified Peer Specialist
- 2015: Melissa Butts, Coordinator Peerlink Program at NAMI Greater Milwaukee, Certified Peer Specialist
- 2016: Mary Lou Burger, Certified Peer Specialist at Pathways to Permanent Housing
- 2017: Shel Gross, Mental Health America of Wisconsin Public Policy Director
- 2018: Denise Johnson, *IndependenceFirst*, SUD/MH Coordinator
- 2019: Mary Neubauer, Mental Health America of Wisconsin, Public Policy and Advocacy Coordinator
- 2020: Otis Winstead, Great Lakes Dryhooch, Executive Director

## About Marie Perry

Marie Perry was the first recipient in 2019 of the Rising Leader Award, in recognition of her outstanding leadership to advance mental health and recovery values in our community. Less than five months after receiving the award Marie died unexpectedly at the age of 31. The Rising Leader Award was renamed in 2020 as the Marie C. Perry Rising Leader Award. Due to the graciousness of Marie's family the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force now has the Marie C. Perry Endowment Fund and can provide an \$800 scholarship to the recipient of this award into the next decade.

Marie put forth her best effort whether it was performing in the thought provoking play, *Pieces In My Own Voice*, working as a Care Coordinator in the Youth Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) Program at La Causa or preparing for a training of a group of adult learners who themselves wanted to become Certified Peer Specialists. Marie was pursuing a graduate degree in clinical mental health counseling at Northern Vermont University, in the Children and Youth track because of her commitment to intervene early to help change the course of recovery. The Award recognizes the legacy of a young woman who was truly a visionary leader making a daily impact in our community. The Task Force is grateful for her dedication to advancing recovery and in her honor established the Marie C. Perry Rising Leader Award.

- 2020 recipient: DeShanda Williams, Pathfinders, Director of Runaway and Homeless Youth Services