



*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 2019 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.

### **Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force Rising Leader Award:**

- This new award has been established to recognize 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.

### **Nominating Procedure**

- Complete the **Nomination Form** to submit your nomination.
- **Deadline: All nominations are due by noon on Friday October 18, 2019.**  
Submit to Barbara Beckert at [barbara.beckert@drwi.org](mailto:barbara.beckert@drwi.org), or mail to: Barbara Beckert, c/o DRW, 6737 Washington Suite 3230, Milwaukee, WI 53214
- Awards will be presented at the fifth annual **Karen Avery Award**, Tuesday November 12, 2019 at IndependenceFirst. This year's forum has the theme "Pathways to Employment".
- Given the focus of the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force, preference will be given to nominees from Milwaukee County and/or whose work has had a positive impact in Milwaukee County.

## 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, an Independent Living Services Coordinator, IndependenceFirst, Certified Peer Specialist
- 2015: Melissa Butts, Coordinator of the Peerlink Program at NAMI Greater Milwaukee and a 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