

Family Center director announces retirement

Search underway for new executive director of The Family Center



WISCONSIN RAPIDS – Family Center Executive Director, Sue Sippel announced her plans to retire this summer. The Family Center Board has begun the search for a new director.

Just four directors have led The Wisconsin Rapids Family Center since incorporating in 1983. The non-profit agency which provides support, shelter and services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault opened its doors July 1, 1984. Arline Hillestad was the agency's first director until retiring in 2012. Sippel has held the position since 2015.

“She came in at a time when there was much work to be done programmatically and financially,” said RaeAnn Thomas, who has served several terms on the Board of Directors for the non-profit. “Within a year, Sue’s work brought solid improvement to an important program and service in the community.”

Sippel brought years of experience to her current position, serving as executive director at the Manitowoc County Domestic Violence Center from 2003 to 2015. She also worked for 13 years at the Family Crisis Center in Stevens Point. Her background also includes stints with CAP Services in Stevens Point, Girl Scouts of Woodland Council (now Girl Scouts of the Northwestern Great Lakes), the Girl Scout Council of the Pacific and UW-Stevens Point.

“Personally, I have been humbled to serve on many state-level committees, bringing the voices of victims and a rural program focus to statewide issues, including The Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse, which I co-chair; the Department of Health Services Domestic Abuse Task Force; and the Wisconsin Balance of State Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry Committee & Implementation, the Coordinated Entry DV Team, which I also chair, and the Emergency Shelter Committee,” Sippel said.

On a local level, Sippel credits support of community partners and the community as a whole for contributing to growth and success of The Family Center.

During her tenure, programs and staff were added to meet the needs of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and sex trafficking, including the Domestic Violence Housing First program, which helps reduce barriers to housing for victims; the Lethality Assessment Protocol, that, in collaboration with law enforcement, puts victims at risk of homicide in touch with an advocate from the scene of the incident; and office hours at various locations, meeting clients at locations convenient to them.

Thomas, current FCI Board of Directors’ president, was part of the committee that hired Sippel and is part of the current search committee working with Leading Transitions, Inc., a non-profit search firm assisting with finding the new director.

Mindy Lubar Price, president and CEO of Leading Transitions, said the firm is currently accepting applications, and will continue to do so through the end of March. Plans are to start interviewing in April, with a goal of naming a new director sometime in May. However, if the right fit is not found, the search will continue, said Lubar Price.

Sippel plans to continue to work in the domestic abuse/sexual assault field, lending her experience to other programs as an interim executive director for domestic violence/sexual assault programs in transition between directors. She also plans to continue her work at the state level.

Sippel's combination of skills and talents are a "rare and valuable mix" and will be missed, but Sippel has taught the Board of Directors what is important to focus on, and how to support a leader for the maximum benefit of the organization, Thomas said.

"We will miss her greatly, but we look forward to the next chapter at The Family Center," Thomas said.

Information about the position and how to apply can be found on The Family Center website at www.familyctr.org. Any questions should be directed to Lubar Price at FamilyCenter@leadingtransitions.com.