

Inspirational Family or Guardian Award Nomination

Award Description:

The Inspirational Family or Guardian Award will be presented to a family or guardian who has significantly contributed time and talents to the InterHab member agency and/or the individual served by the agency.

NOMINEE: The Braden Family

ORGANIZATION: Big Lakes Developmental Center

Provide a narrative including answers to the following questions. You may also attach a maximum of three letters of support. Additional information may be attached if necessary.

- Describe the impact this family or guardian has had on the individual.
- What outcome has resulted from this effort?
- How long has this effort been provided?
- Provide a biographical sketch of this family.
- Additional information.

NARRATIVE:

Ladd and his late wife, Rita Braden, have consistently demonstrated their selflessness by ensuring Steven, their son, has the resources to live his best life. They have not only advocated for their son but also for all the clients of Big Lakes, embodying the spirit of this award.

Steven started services at Big Lakes in August 2007, and since then, the Braden Family has always asked, 'How can we help?'. One of the many examples where Ladd has stepped in to help was when he noticed that the Landfill couldn't bring sorting to the work center due to their box truck being out of commission. This prevented clients from having work opportunities. Ladd approached the owner of The Feed Store (a business near Big Lakes) to assist him in transporting bins of sorting materials from the Landfill to the work center. The Feed Store owner was gracious due to Ladd's outreach in utilizing their skid loader to unload and load the bins to and from the trailer Ladd was transporting them on. This allowed clients to continue to earn an income and have work opportunities.

Ladd and Rita have always encouraged Steven in many ways to allow him opportunity, choice, and independence. Some examples of these opportunities that strengthen Steven's quality of life are Ladd, Steven, and sometimes Ladd's brother taking guys' trips. Steven has had the opportunity to drive a combine, mow Braden's lawn (the lines make an interesting pattern), and help in the nursery at church. Steven recently traveled with Ladd for a beach vacation, and they have both shared their fun vacation stories with staff and other clients.

Almost every weekend, Ladd drives 45 minutes one way to pick Steven up from his Manhattan residence and take him to their home in Clay Center. Steven looks forward to the adventures he will have each weekend with his dad, so he packs his entire wardrobe.

Ladd encourages and supports all the staff who support Steven. He knows each of them by name. The staff truly feel that Ladd and Steven care about them and are vested in their well-being, particularly when they are accepting a new baby, as caring for babies is one of Stevens's passions.

The Braden family supports Big Lakes not only through connections and hands-on work but also financially. In 2021, Ladd joined the Big Lakes Foundation Board and just renewed his term for another three years. The Braden Family has also supported Big Lakes financially with a lifetime giving of over \$16,000, donating to our Annual Giving Campaign, Grow Green Match Day, and several other campaigns since 2015.

The Braden Family has made every effort and continues to give Steven the best life. Steven gets to experience life without worry and as independently as possible. They are advocates for all persons served and a sounding board when staff are looking for connections or opportunities for the clients.

The Braden Family is truly an inspiration to Big Lakes and leads by example to fulfill our mission, vision, and values.

NAME OF PERSON MAKING THIS NOMINATION: Emma Clements

ORGANIZATION: Big Lakes Developmental Center

TELEPHONE: 785-776-9201

E-MAIL: eclements@biglakes.org

I have reviewed and agreed to the criteria for filming the awards video.

I have obtained approval for this nomination from the submitting agency's Executive Director.

Send this form via email to mshreve@interhab.org

The deadline to submit award nominations is June 7!

Inspirational Family Award Letter of Support

Nominee: Braden Family
Organization: Big Lakes Developmental Center, Inc.

It is truly an honor and a pleasure to write this letter of support for the nomination of the Braden Family for the Inspirational Family Award in 2024.

I have known Ladd and his wife, the late Rita Jo Braden, for nearly 20 years. I have never met a more supportive family when it comes to supporting their adult son with IDD. The unconditional love they have for their son does not interfere with their desire for Steven to live his best life, experience all of life's ups and downs, push his boundaries to achieve the most independent life possible.

Ladd will be the first to tell you that Steven is their miracle child. He was not expected to live past his childhood and his doctors gave him a 5% chance of living. But Steven beat those odds and turned 40 this past January. The only way that happened is because of Ladd and Rita. God chose the perfect parents to give Steven to.

Steven is a delight to serve. While he has significant challenges regarding his health, his positive attitude and the sheer joy he exudes everyday reflects his parents, Ladd and Rita Jo. The connection he has with his dad is truly amazing. Not only is Ladd his dad, but he is his best buddy. They truly enjoy the best of what life has to offer, together. For Ladd there are no limitations for Steven, just creative ways to overcome obstacles.

As a board member, Ladd is a strong advocate for persons served and the staff who support them. His common-sense approach to problem solving and humor bring a valuable dynamic to the board that is appreciated by all.

The nomination narrative provides specific examples of how Ladd and Rita Jo has supported Steven and Big Lakes for many years through their actions. They successfully balance their support, generosity and love for Steven with growth opportunities and permission to fail and learn from those experiences. As parents, there is no better example than the Braden's. Please consider the Braden a strong candidate for this award.

Sincerely,



Lori B. Feldkamp
President & CEO