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**MINNESOTA PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING®
LONGITUDINAL STUDY**

**YEARS XXII THROUGH XXV
(CLASSES 26 – 29)**

PREPARED BY

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APRIL 4, 2014**

Minnesota Partners in Policymaking®
Final Report: Long-Term Follow-Up Survey
Class 26 – April 4, 2014
Submitted by Nancy Miller, MS, LPC, HS-BCP
Associate Professor, Metropolitan State University

Class 26

Total class: 32

Total return rate (emailed & USPS): 12 (38%)

All completed surveys were entered on SurveyMonkey

Total surveys emailed: 28

Dates emailed: February 14, February 28, & March 14, 2014

Total surveys completed from emails: 11

Total surveys US sent by postal mail: 4

Dates mailed by USPS: February 19 & March 1, 2014

Total received completed from two mailings: 1

Note: Questions have been numbered to be consistent with class 29 in which an extra question was added to the class 29 survey only.

1. Did the skills you learned during the Partners program continue to be helpful in securing appropriate services today for you or a family member?

Yes, most of the time	9	75%
Yes, some of the time	3	25%
Seldom	0	0%
No, not at all	0	0%
Total	12	100%

2. Overall, how would you rate your current advocacy skills?

Excellent	9	75%
Good	3	25%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Total	12	100%

3. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) have become more independent* at work, home or school.

Yes	10	83%
No	2	17%
Total	12	100%

**Independence* means the extent to which individuals exert control and choice over their own lives.

4. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) am (is) more productive.*

Yes	10	83%
No	2	17%
Total	12	100%

**Productivity* means starting employment or a positive change in one's employment situation (better wages, hours, benefits, improved status, or job advancement).

5. Since graduating from the Partners program, my self-determination (or the self-determination of a family member with a disability) has increased.

Yes	11	100%
No	0	0%
Total	11	100%

Skipped question: 1

**Self-determination* means the freedom to choose where and with whom to live or taking personal responsibility for personal decisions about needed supports and services.

6. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with disability) have experienced more community integration and inclusion.*

Yes	11	92%
No	1	8%
Total	12	100%

**Integration and inclusion means using the same community resources that are available to other citizens or fully participating in community activities.*

7. Since graduation, have you increased or decreased your use of government funded services?

Increased	3	25%
Decreased	1	8%
About the same	8	67%
Total	12	100%

8. My (or my family's) quality of life is better because of my participation in the Partners program.

Strongly Agree	7	58%
Agree	4	34%
Disagree	1	8%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	12	100%

9. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am/is more knowledgeable about my rights.

Yes	12	100%
No	0	0%
Total	12	100%

10. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am more aware of safety issues and can better protect myself (or a family member).

Yes	11	92%
No	1	8%
Total	12	100%

11. As a result of the Partners program, I have contacted and worked with public officials about employment issues, and needed services/supports or improvements in the quality of employment services.

Note: This question was not included on the Long-Term Follow-Up Surveys for classes 26, 27 and 28.

12. What significant changes have occurred in your life (e.g., housing, education, employment, family support, case management, technology, health care, friendships, etc.) or the life of a family member with a disability which you attribute to your Partners program experience?

1. Currently working 3 days a week on a volunteer basis at the Social Security St. Paul office & I'm serving my first three-year term on Merrick's Board of Trustees.
2. Since my experience with the program, I became aware of my eligibility to use an audible speaking program that had been very helpful to me over the years."
3. Fully inclusive education.
4. Participating in many advocacy events in our state. joined boards and committees to secure rights for all with developmental disabilities.
5. None.
6. I moved into my new apartment on Friday January 3 of this year.
7. Doing a volunteer internship at the Social Security St. Paul office 3 days a week.
8. Great changes, getting a clinic open.
9. Education and employment opportunities.

Skipped question: 3

13. What skills did you learn in the program that you still use today?

1. Advocating, teamwork.
2. Since I am still unemployed, there hasn't been an opportunity to test the skills I learn in the program.
3. Advocacy.
4. Government knowledge and how to be effective in changing legislation.
5. Advocacy.
6. Getting ready now to get my own cat.
7. How to ask for what I want.
8. To fight for my rights and the rights of others.
9. More advocating for my son and myself - also others in community.
10. Self advocacy and access to community resources.

Skipped question: 2

14. Looking back at your experience with the Partners program, what recommendations would you make to improve the program?

1. Nothing at all.
2. Provide more information for young adults, on finding a job that offers more than a minimum wage and a place to live.
3. Fewer political opinions.
4. It is a very well developed, and carefully thought out program, I can't think of anything that needs improvement.
5. I think it is a very good program, but when I took the program it needed updating. We have really good specialists in Minnesota and I thought the program relied on outside specialists that we good but not better than what we could offer in Minnesota.
6. Do all the same stuff.
7. Offer more follow up class opportunities.
8. Nothing at all.
9. More time on some subjects.
10. Not Sure.

Skipped question: 2

Minnesota Partners in Policymaking®
Final Report: Long-Term Follow-Up Survey
Class 27 – April 4, 2014
Submitted by Nancy Miller, MS, LPC, HS-BCP
Associate Professor, Metropolitan State University

Class 27

Total class: 26

Total return rate (emailed & USPS): 11 (42%)

All completed surveys were entered on SurveyMonkey.

Total surveys emailed: 22

Total surveys completed from emails: 9

Dates emailed: February 14, February 28 & March 14, 2014

Total surveys sent by US postal mail: 4

Dates mailed by USPS: February 19 & March 1, 2014

Total surveys received from two mailings: 2

Note: Questions have been numbered to be consistent with class 29 in which an extra question was added to the class 29 survey only.

1. Did the skills you learned during the Partners program continue to be helpful in securing appropriate services today for you or a family member?

Yes, most of the time	9	82%
Yes, some of the time	2	18%
Seldom	0	0%
No, not at all	0	0%
Total	11	100%

2. Overall, how would you rate your current advocacy skills?

Excellent	7	64%
Good	3	27%
Fair	1	9%
Poor	0	0%
Total	11	100%

3. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) have become more independent* at work, home or school.

Yes	9	82%
No	2	18%
Total	11	100%

**Independence* means the extent to which individuals exert control and choice over their own lives.

4. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) am (is) more productive.*

Yes	8	73%
No	3	27%
Total	11	100%

**Productivity* means starting employment or a positive change in one's employment situation (better wages, hours, benefits, improved status, or job advancement).

5. Since graduating from the Partners program, my self-determination (or the self-determination of a family member with a disability) has increased.

Yes	8	73%
No	3	27%
Total	11	100%

**Self-determination* means the freedom to choose where and with whom to live or taking personal responsibility for personal decisions about needed supports and services.

6. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with disability) have experienced more community integration and inclusion.*

Yes	9	82%
No	2	18%
Total	11	100%

**Integration and inclusion* means using the same community resources that are available to other citizens or fully participating in community activities.

7. Since graduation, have you increased or decreased your use of government funded services?

Increased	3	30%
Decreased	3	30%
About the same	4	40%
Total	10	100%

Skipped question: 1

8. My (or my family's) quality of life is better because of my participation in the Partners program.

Strongly Agree	6	55%
Agree	5	45%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	11	100%

9. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am/is more knowledgeable about my rights.

Yes	11	100%
No	0	0%
Total	11	100%

10. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am more aware of safety issues and can better protect myself (or a family member).

Yes	11	100%
No	0	0%
Total	11	100%

11. As a result of the Partners program, I have contacted and worked with public officials about employment issues, and needed services/supports or improvements in the quality of employment services.

Note: This question was not included on the Long-Term Follow-Up Surveys for classes 26, 27 and 28.

12. What significant changes have occurred in your life (e.g., housing, education, employment, family support, case management, technology, health care, friendships, etc.) or the life of a family member with a disability which you attribute to your Partners program experience?

1. I've run for a public office, gotten elected and now work for a non-profit. These have been complete career changes. I don't know that I would have had the courage to do these things if I hadn't gone through the Partners program.
2. My friendship has grown with my boyfriend and loved even more.
3. Completely off government support. Have to work three jobs to provide for my daughter's insulin.
4. I have been able to utilize more programs to help keep me in my own home.
5. Ability to ask for things we need.
6. Better employment experience, better communication with doctor.
7. Our son (and his peers) is able to remain in an inclusive school setting because of the advocacy skills at I gained from Partners.
8. Children who need special education.

Skipped question: 3

13. What skills did you learn in the program that you still use today?

1. If I'm handed a microphone, I stand up to speak. I try to not let my emotions become a barrier to what I am trying to accomplish. I definitely don't things as personally as I used to. The history I learned in the class and the process by which parents and people with disabilities gained access, rights and recognition if invaluable.
2. Patience as a virtue.
3. Networking with legislature.
4. Networking with others, also been able to better advocate for myself.
5. To be vocal with more terminology and /or wording to make requests.
6. More responsible; more reassuring.
7. I spend much of my time advocating for my son, and his peers, to help improve our school districts secondary education program.
8. How to advocate.

Skipped question: 3

14. Looking back at your experience with the Partners program, what recommendations would you make to improve the program?

1. Keep doing what you're doing. Even while working for a non-profit that supports people with disabilities I encounter people using the term idiot or moron. I explain the history of those terms and why it's not a good idea to use them.
2. I would change the name of the class.
3. Make the program longer increase funding for the Partners Program so the program can offer further training and even more detailed training to more people.
4. I thought it was awesome. Perhaps more specific examples of participant's specific needs could be addressed or covered. As in "how could this ... Issue be dealt with".
5. More participation from others.
6. I would love to have opportunities to reconnect with the Partners program and participants - annual Partners graduated conference, additional educational opportunities, etc. Having the Program support reuniting graduates and providing opportunities to come together would be very beneficial.
7. More people to attend partner for policy making training.

Skipped question: 4

Minnesota Partners in Policymaking®
Final Report: Long-Term Follow-Up Survey
Class 28 – April 4, 2014
Submitted by Nancy Miller, MS, LPC, HS-BCP
Associate Professor, Metropolitan State University

Class 28

Total class: 30

Total return rate (emailed & USPS): 10 (33%)

All completed surveys were entered on SurveyMonkey

Total surveys emailed: 29

Total surveys completed from emails: 10

Dates emailed: February 14, February 28 & March 14, 2014

Total surveys US postal mail: 1

Dates surveys mailed by USPS: February 19 & March 1, 2014

Total received from two mailings: 0

Note: Questions have been numbered to be consistent with class 29 in which an extra question was added to the class 29 survey only.

1. Did the skills you learned during the Partners program continue to be helpful in securing appropriate services today for you or a family member?

Yes, most of the time	8	80%
Yes, some of the time	2	20%
Seldom	0	0%
No, not at all	0	0%
Total	10	100%

2. Overall, how would you rate your current advocacy skills?

Excellent	5	50%
Good	5	50%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Total	10	100%

3. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) have become more independent* at work, home or school.

Yes	10	100%
No	0	0%
Total	10	100%

**Independence* means the extent to which individuals exert control and choice over their own lives.

4. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) am (is) more productive.*

Yes	4	40%
No	6	60%
Total	10	100%

**Productivity* means starting employment or a positive change in one's employment situation (better wages, hours, benefits, improved status, or job advancement).

5. Since graduating from the Partners program, my self-determination (or the self-determination of a family member with a disability) has increased.

Yes	7	78%
No	2	22%
Total	9	100%

Skipped question: 1

**Self-determination* means the freedom to choose where and with whom to live or taking personal responsibility for personal decisions about needed supports and services.

6. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with disability) have experienced more community integration and inclusion.*

Yes	9	90%
No	1	10%
Total	10	100%

**Integration and inclusion* means using the same community resources that are available to other citizens or fully participating in community activities.

7. Since graduation, have you increased or decreased your use of government funded services?

Increased	2	20%
Decreased	1	10%
About the same	7	70%
Total	10	100%

8. My (or my family's) quality of life is better because of my participation in the Partners program.

Strongly Agree	6	60%
Agree	4	40%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	10	100%

9. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am/is more knowledgeable about my rights.

Yes	10	100%
No	0	0%
Total	10	100%

10. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am more aware of safety issues and can better protect myself (or a family member).

Yes	9	90%
No	1	10%
Total	10	100%

11. As a result of the Partners program, I have contacted and worked with public officials about employment issues, and needed services/supports or improvements in the quality of employment services.

Note: This question was not included on the Long-Term Follow-Up Surveys for classes 26, 27 and 28.

12. What significant changes have occurred in your life (e.g., housing, education, employment, family support, case management, technology, health care, friendships, etc.) or the life of a family member with a disability which you attribute to your Partners program experience?

1. We just finished building a handicap accessible house for our two children with disabilities. Their waivers help pay for some of the modifications and we now have a much safer house. I fought hard for their waivers for a year and then got them on two years ago!
2. Our daughter is more included in school now.
3. She has become more independent emotionally and knows how to ask for what she needs to be successful - without any kind of entitlement - just what is fair and reasonable and I believe that is received more positively.
4. That I am more independent with my goals.
5. Better equipped to help my son (17) plan for his future and be successful in integrating into adult life.
6. Health care and community participation.

Skipped question: 4

13. What skills did you learn in the program that you still use today?

1. Conflict resolution, who to call in specific areas if I am having issues, advocacy for others than my children, mentoring.
2. Ability to explore and ASK for what my daughter needs and for her to do the same, respectfully, be with tenacity.
3. To speak up to the people that are putting down other people with disability.
4. Advocacy, who to talk to and how to follow up with people that can make decisions.
5. I learned to have the confidence to advocate on any level.

Skipped question: 5

14. Looking back at your experience with the Partners program, what recommendations would you make to improve the program?

1. I feel like if there was transportation for the rural areas to attend, you may get more attendees that are not from the metro. Many people I know don't have reliable transportation or don't have the ability to drive...how can we get these folks there? Just a thought!
2. More activities to connect after the program is over.
3. More centrally located within the State.
4. n/a
5. Personalized experience to individual, allow participants to work on own personal issues throughout program. Everyone has differing needs and some might be more focused on education experiences vs work and living independently.
6. School remains the most difficult agency to work with for school age children. There are very low expectations for academics. Some special education settings are inappropriate, but extremely difficult to change. I feel misled when being trained in educational advocacy by experts. The reality is so much different than the model. IDEA is excellent, but schools aren't even touching the intent of the law. This continues to be a high need area, but the trainers need to "get real" about what parents can expect.

Skipped question: 4

Minnesota Partners in Policymaking®
Final Report: Long-Term Follow-Up Survey
Class 29 – April 14, 2014
Submitted by Nancy Miller, MS, LPC, HS-BCP
Associate Professor, Metropolitan State University

Class 29

Total class: 28

Total return rate (emailed & USPS): 13 (46%)

All surveys were entered on SurveyMonkey.

Total surveys emailed: 27

Total surveys completed from emails: 13

Dates emailed: February 14, February 28 & March 14, 2014

Total surveys US postal mail: 1

Dates survey mailed by US Post: February 19 & March 1, 2014

Total received from two mailings: 0

1. Did the skills you learned during the Partners program continue to be helpful in securing appropriate services today for you or a family member?

Yes, most of the time	11	85%
Yes, some of the time	2	15%
Seldom	0	0%
No, not at all	0	0%
Total	13	100%

2. Overall, how would you rate your current advocacy skills?

Excellent	7	54%
Good	6	46%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Total	13	100%

3. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) have become more independent* at work, home or school.

Yes	12	92%
No	1	8%
Total	13	100%

**Independence* means the extent to which individuals exert control and choice over their own lives.

4. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) am (is) more productive.*

Yes	9	69%
No	4	31%
Total	13	100%

**Productivity* means starting employment or a positive change in one's employment situation (better wages, hours, benefits, improved status, or job advancement).

5. Since graduating from the Partners program, my self-determination (or the self-determination of a family member with a disability) has increased.

Yes	12	92%
No	1	8%
Total	13	100%

**Self-determination* means the freedom to choose where and with whom to live or taking personal responsibility for personal decisions about needed supports and services.

6. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with disability) have experienced more community integration and inclusion.*

Yes	12	92%
No	1	8%
Total	13	100%

**Integration and inclusion* means using the same community resources that are available to other citizens or fully participating in community activities.

7. Since graduation, have you increased or decreased your use of government funded services?

Increased	5	38%
Decreased	0	0%
About the same	8	62%
Total	13	100%

8. My (or my family's) quality of life is better because of my participation in the Partners program.

Strongly Agree	9	69%
Agree	4	31%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	13	100%

9. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am/is more knowledgeable about my rights.

Yes	12	92%
No	1	8%
Total	13	100%

10. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am more aware of safety issues and can better protect myself (or a family member).

Yes	12	92%
No	1	8%
Total	13	100%

11. As a result of the Partners program, I have contacted and worked with public officials about employment issues, and needed services/supports or improvements in the quality of employment services.

Note: This question was not included on the Long-Term Follow-Up Surveys for classes 26, 27 and 28.

Yes	10	77%
No	3	23%
Total	13	100%

12. What significant changes have occurred in your life (e.g., housing, education, employment, family support, case management, technology, health care, friendships, etc.) or the life of a family member with a disability which you attribute to your Partners program experience?

1. Friendships have increased, and I'm referring many other families to this great program.
2. Much more confident and willing to go out on a limb for people.
3. My 16 year old son (with a disability) is now speaking with me at conferences!
4. Teaching my son how to advocate for himself at school- the need for a parent to intercede has

decreased.

5. I have created relationships with elected officials to be able to share my experience and struggles.
6. After four years my daughter finally received a 504. We were able to secure a new waiver for my son for life skill development.
7. Education, health care, friendship, case management.
8. I was able to know who to contact to get services.

Skipped question: 5

13. What skills did you learn in the program that you still use today?

1. Dealing with the political systems, local politicians. Advocating for others
2. I'm much more aware of the lack of rights for those living with disabilities, and much more driven to make changes in my community. My experience with both my own children and the Partners program led me to make a career change - I now work with teenagers with disabilities, and I love my work. I think I may go on to get my Masters in some mental health field so I can do even more for these kids.
3. Advocacy
4. Confidence in advocacy work. We are working in my community to start an IEP buddy program for families using special education services. I love helping other families learn better advocacy skills.
5. The ability to network / connect with service providers improving process or situation for people who come after our son
6. Volunteering for community advocacy committees
7. Laws
8. I now have a child with ASD

Skipped question: 5

14. Looking back at your experience with the Partners program, what recommendations would you make to improve the program?

1. Finding more ways to encourage families to participate in the program. I hear a lot of 'I don't have time. My schedule does fit. I can't take time off work.
2. Continue program and encourage social workers to attend.
3. I loved my experience with Partners. The speakers were top notch and the experiences were very helpful. I have no suggestions for change...except that I would love to see every family affected by disability benefit from it!
4. The county commissioner session - these individuals hold the keys for accessing service- they need to be educated along with advocates as they don't understand the road blocks they create- they should participate in the learning for the whole weekend
5. None.
6. None! Loved every moment.
7. More local government involvement.

Skipped question: 6

Minnesota Partners in Policymaking®
Final Report: Long-Term Follow-Up Survey
Combined Classes 26-29 April 4, 2014
Submitted by Nancy Miller, MS, LPC, HS-BCP
Associate Professor, Metropolitan State University

Class 26: 32 class participants; 12 respondents 38%
 Class 27: 26 class participants; 11 respondents 42%
 Class 28: 30 class participants; 10 respondents 33%
 Class 29: 28 class participants; 13 respondents 46%

Total class participants: 116
Total respondents: 46
Response rate: 40%

Survey links emailed: February 14, February 28 & March 14, 2014
 Surveys mailed by USPS: February 19 & March 1, 2014

*See additional details on result numbers in reports for each class.
 All surveys, including those received by postal mail, were entered on SurveyMonkey.

- The return rate for the 2014 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 40%
- The return rate for the 2013 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 35%
- The return rate for the 2012 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 39%
- The return rate for the 2011 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 47%
- The return rate for the 2010 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 43%
- The return rate for the 2009 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 45%.

1. Did the skills you learned during the Partners program continue to be helpful in securing appropriate services today for you or a family member?

Yes, most of the time	37	80%
Yes, some of the time	9	20%
Seldom	0	0%
No, not at all	0	0%
Total	46	100%

2. Overall, how would you rate your current advocacy skills?

Excellent	28	61%
Good	17	37%
Fair	1	2%
Poor	0	0%
Total	46	100%

3. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) have become more independent* at work, home or school.

Yes	41	89%
No	5	11%
Total	46	100%

**Independence* means the extent to which individuals exert control and choice over their own lives.

4. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) am (is) more productive.*

Yes	31	67%
No	15	33%
Total	46	100%

**Productivity* means starting employment or a positive change in one's employment situation (better wages, hours, benefits, improved status, or job advancement).

5. Since graduating from the Partners program, my self-determination (or the self-determination of a family member with a disability) has increased.

Yes	38	86%
No	6	14%
Total	44	100%

Skipped question: 2

**Self-determination* means the freedom to choose where and with whom to live or taking personal responsibility for personal decisions about needed supports and services.

6. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with disability) have experienced more community integration and inclusion.*

Yes	41	89%
No	5	11%
Total	46	100%

**Integration and inclusion* means using the same community resources that are available to other citizens or fully participating in community activities.

7. Since graduation, have you increased or decreased your use of government funded services?

Increased	13	29%
Decreased	5	11%
About the same	27	60%
Total	45	100%

Skipped question: 1

8. My (or my family's) quality of life is better because of my participation in the Partners program.

Strongly Agree	28	61%
Agree	17	37%
Disagree	1	2%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	46	100%

9. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am/is more knowledgeable about my rights.

Yes	45	98%
No	1	2%
Total	46	100%

10. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am more aware of safety issues and can better protect myself (or a family member).

Yes	43	93%
No	3	7%
Total	46	100%

11. As a result of the Partners program, I have contacted and worked with public officials about employment issues, and needed services/supports or improvements in the quality of employment services.

Note: This question was not included on the Long-Term Follow-Up Surveys for classes 26, 27 and 28.

Yes	10	77%
No	3	23%
Total (class 29 only)	13	100%

12. What significant changes have occurred in your life (e.g., housing, education, employment, family support, case management, technology, health care, friendships, etc.) or the life of a family member with a disability which you attribute to your Partners program experience?

1. Currently working 3 days a week on a volunteer basis at the Social Security St. Paul office & I'm serving my first three-year term on Merrick's Board of Trustees.
2. Since my experience with the program, I became aware of my eligibility to use an audible speaking program that had been very helpful to me over the years."
3. Fully inclusive education.
4. Participating in many advocacy events in our state. joined boards and committees to secure rights for all with developmental disabilities.
5. None.
6. I moved into my new apartment on Friday January 3 of this year.
7. Doing a volunteer internship at the Social Security St. Paul office 3 days a week.
8. Great changes, getting a clinic open.
9. Education and employment opportunities.
10. I've run for a public office, gotten elected and now work for a non-profit. These have been complete career changes. I don't know that I would have had the courage to do these things if I hadn't gone through the Partners program.
11. My friendship has grown with my boyfriend and loved even more.
12. Completely off government support. Have to work three jobs to provide for my daughter's insulin.
13. I have been able to utilize more programs to help keep me in my own home.
14. Ability to ask for things we need.
15. Better employment experience, better communication with doctor.
16. Our son (and his peers) is able to remain in an inclusive school setting because of the advocacy skills at I gained from Partners.
17. Children who need special education.
18. We just finished building a handicap accessible house for our two children with disabilities. Their waivers help pay for some of the modifications and we now have a much safer house. I fought hard for their waivers for a year and then got them on two years ago!
19. Our daughter is more included in school now.
20. She has become more independent emotionally and knows how to ask for what she needs to be successful - without any kind of entitlement - just what is fair and reasonable and I believe that is received more positively.
21. That I am more independent with my goals.
22. Better equipped to help my son (17) plan for his future and be successful in integrating into adult life.
23. Health care and community participation.
24. Friendships have increased, and I'm referring many other families to this great program.
25. Much more confident and willing to go out on a limb for people.
26. My 16 year old son (with a disability) is now speaking with me at conferences!
27. Teaching my son how to advocate for himself at school- the need for a parent to intercede has decreased.
28. I have created relationships with elected officials to be able to share my experience and struggles.
29. After four years my daughter finally received a 504. We were able to secure a new waiver for my son for life skill development.
30. Education, health care, friendship, case management.
31. I was able to know who to contact to get services.

13. What skills did you learn in the program that you still use today?

1. Advocating, teamwork.
2. Since I am still unemployed, there hasn't been an opportunity to test the skills I learn in the program.
3. Advocacy.
4. Government knowledge and how to be effective in changing legislation.
5. Advocacy.
6. Getting ready now to get my own cat.
7. How to ask for what I want.
8. To fight for my rights and the rights of others.
9. More advocating for my son and myself - also others in community.
10. Self advocacy and access to community resources.
11. If I'm handed a microphone, I stand up to speak. I try to not let my emotions become a barrier to what I am trying to accomplish. I definitely don't things as personally as I used to. The history I learned in the class and the process by which parents and people with disabilities gained access, rights and recognition if invaluable.
12. Patience as a virtue.
13. Networking with legislature.
14. Networking with others, also been able to better advocate for myself.
15. To be vocal with more terminology and /or wording to make requests.
16. More responsible; more reassuring.
17. I spend much of my time advocating for my son, and his peers, to help improve our school districts secondary education program.
18. How to advocate.
19. Conflict resolution, who to call in specific areas if I am having issues, advocacy for others than my children, mentoring.
20. Ability to explore and ASK for what my daughter needs and for her to do the same, respectfully, be with tenacity.
21. To speak up to the people that are putting down other people with disability.
22. Advocacy, who to talk to and how to follow up with people that can make decisions.
23. I learned to have the confidence to advocate on any level.
24. Dealing with the political systems, local politicians. Advocating for others
25. I'm much more aware of the lack of rights for those living with disabilities, and much more driven to make changes in my community. My experience with both my own children and the Partners program led me to make a career change - I now work with teenagers with disabilities, and I love my work. I think I may go on to get my Masters in some mental health field so I can do even more for these kids.
26. Advocacy
27. Confidence in advocacy work. We are working in my community to start an IEP buddy program for families using special education services. I love helping other families learn better advocacy skills.
28. The ability to network / connect with service providers improving process or situation for people who come after our son
29. Volunteering for community advocacy committees
30. Laws
31. I now have a child with ASD

14. Looking back at your experience with the Partners program, what recommendations would you make to improve the program?

1. Nothing at all.
2. Provide more information for young adults, on finding a job that offers more than a minimum wage and a place to live.
3. Fewer political opinions.
4. It is a very well developed, and carefully thought out program, I can't think of anything that needs improvement.
5. I think it is a very good program, but when I took the program it needed updating. We have really good specialists in Minnesota and I thought the program relied on outside specialists that we good but not better than what we could offer in Minnesota.
6. Do all the same stuff.
7. Offer more follow up class opportunities.
8. Nothing at all.
9. More time on some subjects.
10. Not Sure.
11. Keep doing what you're doing. Even while working for a non-profit that supports people with disabilities I encounter people using the term idiot or moron. I explain the history of those terms and why it's not a good idea to use them.
12. I would change the name of the class.
13. Make the program longer increase funding for the Partners Program so the program can offer further training and even more detailed training to more people.
14. I thought it was awesome. Perhaps more specific examples of participant's specific needs could be addressed or covered. As in "how could this ... Issue be dealt with".
15. More participation from others.
16. I would love to have opportunities to reconnect with the Partners program and participants - annual Partners graduated conference, additional educational opportunities, etc. Having the Program support reuniting graduates and providing opportunities to come together would be very beneficial.
17. More people to attend partner for policy making training.
18. I feel like if there was transportation for the rural areas to attend, you may get more attendees that are not from the metro. Many people I know don't have reliable transportation or don't have the ability to drive...how can we get these folks there? Just a thought!
19. More activities to connect after the program is over.
20. More centrally located within the State.
21. n/a
22. Personalized experience to individual, allow participants to work on own personal issues throughout program. Everyone has differing needs and some might be more focused on education experiences vs work and living independently.
23. School remains the most difficult agency to work with for school age children. There are very low expectations for academics. Some special education settings are inappropriate, but extremely difficult to change. I feel mislead when being trained in educational advocacy by experts. The reality is so much different than the model. IDEA is excellent, but schools aren't even touching the intent of the law. This continues to be a high need area, but the trainers need to "get real" about what parents can expect.
24. Finding more ways to encourage families to participate in the program. I hear a lot of 'I don't have time. My schedule does fit. I can't take time off work.
25. Continue program and encourage social workers to attend.

26. I loved my experience with Partners. The speakers were top notch and the experiences were very helpful. I have no suggestions for change...except that I would love to see every family affected by disability benefit from it!
27. The county commissioner session - these individuals hold the keys for accessing service- they need to be educated along with advocates as they don't understand the road blocks they create- they should participate in the learning for the whole weekend
28. None.
29. None! Loved every moment.
30. More local government involvement.