

MY JOURNEY FROM PARENT TO POLICYMAKER

BY: LISA HEDDENS



WHEN LEAVING THIS SESSION, WE WILL HAVE COVERED....

- My journey from Parent to Policymaker
- Paul's journey
- Advocacy tools
- Telling your story

THE EARLY YEARS

What I wanted to be when I grew up



- Graduated from Iowa State University with a B.S. in Elementary Education



First Child, Makenzie

PAUL'S BIRTH

Dear Family and Friends,

November 14th was one of our most joyous days. The birth of our son Paul was simply overwhelming. After having been on six weeks of strict bedrest, due to preterm labor, I made it to the 36th week and we were looking forward to bringing a healthy child into this world. But news came a day later that our son had Down syndrome. Although he may have special needs, we do not see this as an obstacle, but rather a chance to experience life's many challenges. Paul was brought into this world to enrich our lives, which he has already done. The love we share for him and our family is ever growing.



OVERWHELMED

- Visualizing Future
- Family
- Support Group
- Early Access (IFSP)
- Individualized Service Plans (IEP)
- Medicaid application
- SSI application

Community Involvement

- Mainstream Living
- The Arc of Story County

Work

- LSI
- Iowa Protection & Advocacy (aka Disability Rights Iowa)
- ASK Resource Center
- Legislature (2002)

- **Boards and Commissions**

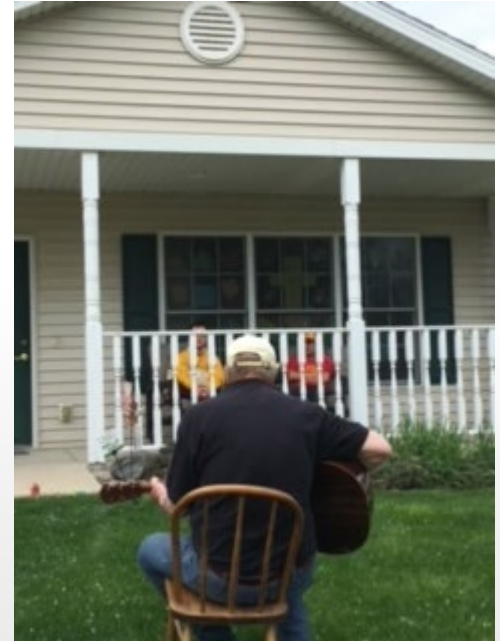
- State Rehabilitation Council
- Mental Health and Disability Commission
- Other disability related over the past 20+ years



SCHOOL



THE FIRST MOVE 2014



STATE REPRESENTATIVE 2002 -2019

Committees served on:

Education, Public Safety, Human
Resources, Environmental Protection,
Health and Human Services Sub-
Appropriations



STORY COUNTY SUPERVISOR

2019- Present

- Aging Resources of Central Iowa
- Board of Health
- HIRTA
- CICS
- Central Iowa Workforce CEO
- DeCat
- NACO- Healthy Counties, Economic Development & Workforce
- Transportation Collaborative
- Healthy Communities
- The Arc Of Story County
- MICA

PAUL TODAY



WWE



DEVELOPING YOUR STORY

- What is your Story?
- When does it begin?
- What and how much of it are you willing to share?
- Know your audience – who talking to and how much time do you/they have
- Practice
- Let people know it's ok to ask questions

Snapshot of Iowa's Government

U.S. Senate

2

GOVERNOR

1

Counties

99

**Iowa
Senate**

Cities

U.S. House

4

50

947

**Iowa House
of
Representatives**

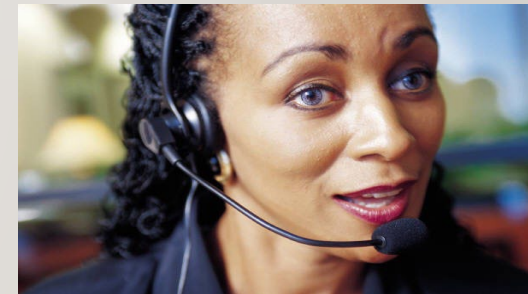
Townships

100

1599



HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGE AND TALK TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL



PREPARING YOUR MESSAGE

1. Define the Problem

- ↳ Put it in real terms
- ↳ Personalize it – How does it affect you?

2. Identify a possible solution

- ↳ What needs to happen and why?

PREPARING YOUR MESSAGE

3. Research Your Issue

↳ Be knowledgeable about the issue

↳ Put together a fact sheet

↳ Why is it important?

↳ Who do you direct your message to?

PREPARING YOUR MESSAGE

4. Research your Elected Official

- ↳ Know who is your Senator & Representative, Mayor, City Council, County Supervisors
- ↳ What committees do they serve on?
- ↳ What is their background?
- ↳ Look for personal connections

CONTACTING YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL

↳ **Call them** on the phone

↳ **Meet with them**

↳ Attend forums and talk with them before or after the forum. **They want to meet you and hear from you!**

↳ **Write them.** Send a letter or email.

↳ Be sure to provide your home address, email and phone number so they can get back to you.

DELIVERING YOUR MESSAGE

1. Introduce yourself
2. Identify your issue
3. Tell them how the issue affects you
4. Tell them what you want us to do.
5. Let them ask you some questions
6. Ask them questions
7. Leave them some information on the issue
8. Provide them with your contact information
9. Follow – Up!

BEST WAYS TO ADVOCATE

- **Personal Visits**

- Identify yourself as a constituent

- Schedule an appointment

- Visit one-on-one or in a small group

- Leave something in writing for them to review

- **Personal Letter**

- Write them a letter

- Tell them if you're a constituent

- Explain the issue

- Provide them with your contact information (phone, address)

- **Telephone**

- Call them at home - (Legislators can also be reached at the Capitol, but only while in session)

- Talk with Staff

- Provide them with your contact information so they can follow-up



THINGS TO AVOID

& Threatening comments – (do this or we'll defeat you in the next election)

& Form Letters

& Multiple topics/issues – separate issues to better focus your concerns

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Volunteer at an organization, school, etc.
- Apply to serve on a board of an organization
- Run for Office
- Be a resource for other families to navigate the ‘system’”

QUESTIONS ?

Lisa Heddens

heddenslisa@gmail.com

