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For More Information

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National Disability Advocate Brings Choice Message to Chicago-area Citizens with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and their Families

Julie Huso, Executive Director of VOR, a national advocacy organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), traveled to the Chicago-area last week to meet with individuals with I/DD and their families. During her week-long visit, Huso toured public and private facilities for people with I/DD, shared information about VOR's national advocacy with families of disabled individuals, and met with VOR leaders and members.



Caroline Walsworth

“VOR was founded in Illinois 30 years, right here in the Chicago-area,” said Huso. “While I enjoy all my travels on behalf of VOR, visiting the Chicago-area is a bit of a homecoming. I enjoyed visits with advocates like Sam and Paula Golden, and Caroline Walsworth, who have been dedicated VOR advocates for 30 years, and Barbara Cukierski whose family has supported VOR for more than 20 years. That sort of commitment is special.”



Sam and Paula Golden

While in the Chicago-area Huso toured [Marklund](#), a private facility providing 24-hour residential care to infants, children and adults with severe and profound developmental disabilities in the northern Illinois. Residences are located in Bloomingdale and Geneva. Gil Fonger, Marklund's President/CEO, was recently elected to VOR's national Board of Directors.



**Gil Fonger,
President/CEO,
Marklund; VOR
Board Member**

“VOR is very fortunate to have Gil on our Board,” said Huso. “He has tremendous experience working with Boards and an understanding of the care people with profound disabilities require. He's also the parent of a young lady with disabilities, so he not only has know-how, but also heart.”

In addition to Marklund, Huso met with Arn and Camille Baranachek, leaders of the St. Joseph Parent Association who represent families of Mt. St. Joseph, a private facility providing care to profoundly disabled woman in Lake Zurich, Illinois; and David Fried, an attorney and a personal friend to the Goldenes who recently joined VOR's national Government Affairs Committee, chaired by Sam Golden.

Huso also toured Ann Kiley Center, a state-operated facility for disabled adults in Waukegan, hosted by Wayne Ryerson.

“Nothing compares to seeing these quality programs first hand and meeting the people they care for,” remarked Huso. “This was my first opportunity to tour Marklund, which like Mt. St. Joseph and Misericordia in the Chicago-area, and Beverly Farm in Southern Illinois, all provide exceptional care to some of Illinois’ most profoundly disabled citizens. Likewise, the Kiley Center in Waukegan, a publicly operated facility, is meeting a need. These are real homes to the people being served so well.”



**Julie Huso,
Executive
Director, VOR**

VOR is the only national organization challenging a nationwide trend to close facilities serving people with I/DD. Illinois has not been spared. Some state-operated centers have been closed and private and public facilities have been threatened.

“Illinois citizens with profound I/DD who choose and require highly specialized, facility-based care are caught squarely in the cross-fire,” remarked Huso. “This uncertainty is difficult. Families, especially aging parents, are concerned about their loved ones’ future care. Their fear is palpable and heartbreaking. VOR works daily with advocates around the country to challenge this trend and support residential choice based on individual preferences and needs.”

Huso’s visit ended on a high note, literally.

In addition to being dedicated advocates, the Goldenes are also talented musicians. Huso ended her week traveling to South Haven, Michigan to attend an annual concert that the Goldenes founded in 1969 at the Sleepy Hollow Resort. Sam played the Cello and their son, Jonathon, played the bass.



Jonathon Golden



“This is a truly remarkable couple. They’ve been dedicated to the well-being of all people with disabilities for more than 50 years, having sacrificed much time, energy and personal resources. They’ve advocated from their home in Chicago, and have also traveled to Springfield and to Washington, D.C. countless times,” said Huso. “But, music has been just as special to the Goldenes – an escape of sorts. I was privileged to be able hear their beautiful music first-hand.”

Sam Golden

About VOR:

VOR is a national organization that advocates for high quality care and human rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Offering community, legal, health care and educational resources for families of individuals with special needs, VOR is committed to providing help for people with disabilities. Standing up for long term care facilities and community disability programs, VOR is dedicated to maintaining family choice for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For more information about VOR, please visit us at www.vor.net.

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