

**Remarks prepared for a presentation to the Harvard Innovations in Government  
Award Committee**

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**Lu Rowley, Department of Human Services, Waushara County, Wisconsin**

Caregivers are at the heart of the work that established Cooperative Care as a viable business entity. Many of us have had first hand experience with the need for caregiver assistance as we deal with aging or disabled family and friends. We understand the importance of maintaining independence and being able to stay at home and in our home communities. We understand that nursing homes or other institutions are the last place anyone wants to be and yet in our long term care system, it is only the institutional placement that is provided as an entitlement to so many of our aging population. Care at home should be also be a right and we feel it is a public responsibility to make that happen. This being said we also realize that the demand for home care workers is increasing while a dependable home care workforce is decreasing. One labor analyst predicts, for example, that between the years 2000 and 2010 the demand will grow by 62% in comparison with a growth prediction of 15% across all other positions.

Public services in Wisconsin are administered by each of 72 counties under the long held principle of home rule. Programs inadequately funded by state and federal sources, such as community based long-term care become a local challenge. Waiting lists and service restrictions are put in place, often with the number of people waiting, exceeding those receiving services. Service dollars are stretched as far as possible, usually by paying home care workers as little as possible. We were focused entirely on the consumer until it began to sink in that we also had a responsibility to broaden that focus to include the home care provider. As a public agency we have a responsibility to them and their families as they struggle to be self-sufficient. Without them the objectives of community-based care would never be met, leaving institutional care as the only option when caregiving demands overwhelmed family and friends.

Cooperatives have been a part of rural life for well over 100 years – invented by people themselves to attempt to succeed financially. Cooperatives have been well suited to the agrarian economy but it is also easy to see from Donna's comments that they can be well suited to other economic endeavors. The Bronx based Cooperative Home Care Associates saw that value with their development as a welfare reform project in the mid 1980's. We will always be grateful to them for providing the spark of the idea that ignited the reality of Cooperative Care. Cooperative Care has in turn been able to provide sparks of its own that have now touched off project planning in many parts of the country, several of which will be made possible by federal funding through legislation sponsored by Senator Kohl that provides replication funds through the agricultural budget, legislation that was grounded in the Cooperative Care experience.

We look forward to the future.