

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

I am a caregiver. I was interested in this work when I observed my mother receiving care in her home some 15 years ago. I am also the President of the Board of Directors of a cooperative that has an operating budget of just under \$850,000. But more importantly, I am a caregiver.

There are 80 of us caregivers who are member owners of Cooperative Care in Waushara County, Wisconsin. On any given day, 50 to 60 of us will be in homes of up to 100 citizens who are elderly, developmentally disabled, or have some other disability that prevents them from caring for themselves independently. We get them up from bed, bathe them, make them meals, empty their commodes, mow their lawns, and change their beds. We do what they cannot do so that they can stay living in their homes safely.

We do not work for an agency; we work for ourselves as member owners of Cooperative Care. We exist as an organization for two reasons. One, we give quality care to people who need our help. Secondly, to see that our member owners are better paid - and for the first time, to have access to workers' compensation, healthcare, holiday and overtime pay, personal time off, training, scheduling back up, and support in problem solving. We are no longer alone, having to work sick because there is no back-up, working for not much more than minimum wage, and unable to go to the doctor because there is no coverage for healthcare or work related injuries.

We do not work for a corporation that will manage our funds. At Cooperative Care, all the members are the owners, and any net profit belongs to us.

To run our business well, we are thoughtful and innovative. We reinforce our commitment to quality care with promises made to our clients that we will live by a set of values that assure them respect, honesty, dependability, and thoroughness.

Above all, we are caregivers. We don't just give a bath, we build a relationship. We don't just toilet someone, we protect their dignity. We don't just do a job; we make sure they know that we care about them as people.

I am very proud to be just a caregiver among caregivers at Cooperative Care.