



**WAISMAN CENTER**  
UW-MADISON

## VILLAGE FACTS

[www.familyvillage.wisc.edu](http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu)

- Since it was established ten years ago, more than 1.5 million visitors from 100 countries have found their way to the Family Village.
- The site has won many awards, including a Top Ten winner by World Wide Web Associates and designation as an outstanding site by [pediatricneurology.com](http://pediatricneurology.com)
- The site was updated, improved, and re-launched in October 2005, following recommendations of an advisory committee consisting of parents of children with disabilities, faculty and staff from the Waisman Center, and community representatives.



**Disability Culture**

One of the new buildings links visitors to fascinating resources ranging from the history of the disability rights

movement to people with disabilities in film and television.

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## family village

**A Global Community of Disability-Related Resources**

On February 13, 1996 the Waisman Center opened an innovative World Wide Web site, one of the first resources on the Internet specially designed for families and people affected by disability. The site was developed in response to the isolation and frustration experienced by many parents of children with disabilities as they searched for information. Called the "Family Village," the web site provides quick access to a centralized source of disability-related information in an easy-to-use format.

Organized like a community, the Family Village web site uses familiar symbols, or icons, to lead the user to different kinds of information. A Library icon, for example, leads to a "card catalog" that links the user to support networks, discussion groups, on-line articles, and web sites about specific diagnoses (over 400 conditions). A visit to the "Mall" will direct the visitor to vendors of adaptive toys, shoes, and clothing for children with disabilities. And by clicking on a Coffee Shop icon, parents can communicate with other families who have similar interests.

The Family Village supports parents and individuals with disabilities in significant ways. Families can tap into a larger circle of people than would ever be possible in their own community. Parents can browse through many sources of information about their child's diagnosis, symptoms, and promising treatments. Because the site is well organized, well researched, and kept up-to-date, visitors to the Family Village avoid the frustration of searching through the massive amount of information scattered over the Internet and trying to determine its validity.

The Waisman Center is an ideal site for this project because of its extensive research and outreach programs for people with disabilities and its expertise in computer technology. The site's design and organization reflect the experience and expertise of its coordinator, a parent whose son has multiple disabilities.

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Who uses the Family Village?

- Family members who would like to communicate with other families who share common concerns and experiences.

- People who have a disability. In the United States, nearly one in five—53 million people—have some level of disability. One in eight—or 33 million—have a severe disability, such as mental retardation or other developmental disabilities.

- Service providers to people with disabilities, including special educators, teachers, therapists, nurses, and physicians.

- Public policymakers who deal with education, health, and disability issues.

- Media representatives who write about education, health, and disability issues.

- Students who are pursuing professions related to the field of developmental disabilities.

- Anyone who is searching for information about resources and services for people who have disabilities and their families.