

# Neal Siegal Awarded the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Disability Rights Iowa Joel B. Rydberg Self Advocacy Hero Award

In April of 2018, Disability Rights Iowa gave the newly designated Joel B. Rydberg Self Advocacy Hero Award to Neal Siegal of West Des Moines for his unwavering spirit. DRI established the annual award to acknowledge community members who promote and culture excellent self-advocacy skills in themselves and those around them.

Honorees for the award are nominated by DRI staff and then confirmed by the Board of Directors.

Neal Siegal was injured while riding his bicycle in a hit and run accident which left him with a traumatic brain injury and chronic pain. Briefly after Iowa switched to a private Medicaid system, Neal's benefits were cut in half with no proper notice, and he was denied the right to appeal. Neal brought his case to Disability Rights Iowa, and together with our staff, he won back his coverage. Neal fought for his case without pause, and along with his longtime partner Beth, he got the services he needed through the Brain Injury Waiver under the Consumer Choice Option.

Disability Rights Iowa was honored to present the newly renamed award in the spirit of Joel Rydberg, who was also a steadfast self-advocate within the community. His mother, Beth Rydberg, his father, Bruce Rydberg, and his twin brother, Neal Rydberg, were all in attendance at the award ceremony.

"Thank you for the way you have honored Joel and our family with the renaming of the Hero Self Advocacy award. Perseverance is an essential component of advocacy," Beth said at the ceremony. "Like Joel, may you continue to advocate for the life *you* choose."