



People First

News and Information for the OPWDD Community | Fall 2014

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I am Able...

If you haven't heard about the OPWDD's wildly popular "selfie" awareness campaign, we can only assume you haven't been checking your email or your social media accounts. Flip to page 2 for more...



Governor Puts Work First

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo recently signed an Executive Order to establish the Employment First Commission, which will be tasked with creating an employment first policy in New York State. The initiative will help the state achieve its goal to increase the employment rate of people with disabilities and register 100 businesses to hire people with disabilities as part of their workforce strategy.

The Executive Order builds on the employment services currently offered by OPWDD to people with developmental disabilities who have the option to work, including supported employment, the employment training program, self-directed service options, employment and benefits counseling, and the recently launched Pathway to Employment program.

The OPWDD Transformation Agenda also outlines strategies to increase competitive and integrated employment opportunities and sets targets to transform sheltered workshops to models of integrated employment.

We look forward to contributing to the Governor's Employment First Commission goals through OPWDD's many services and supports that assist individuals with developmental disabilities to prepare for, find, and maintain jobs and live richer lives. As always, we will continue to work with individuals and families to ensure that they have options and that their choices are respected. ■

Kerry A. Delaney
Acting Commissioner

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We are Able!

The OPWDD launched the "I am Able..." campaign at the Great New York State Fair where we invited individuals visiting the fair to take their "selfie" in front of our display and complete the statement "I am able..." - and all fairgoers were invited

to submit the phrase "I support ability"

for us to post with their "selfie" portrait to our [Facebook page](#). We have received an overwhelming response from fairgoers and from submissions received through our website at www.opwdd.ny.gov/iamable...

The good news is it's not too late to take part in the "selfie" awareness campaign! So, get out your smart phone – or other digital device – and take a photo of yourself or ask a friend or family member to help. We want to hear about your "Able" no matter what your ability level. Or, if you just want to support ability, you can send your photo in support.

We hope you enjoy some of our favorite photos that we hand-picked to share with you (with their permission, of course!).



I am able...to be Superman!



I am able...to experience joy



We Support Ability!



The OPWDD Selfie Booth at the NYS Fair

NYSARC 65th Anniversary

Nearly 1,200 people gathered at the NYS Capitol to mark the end of two separate journeys and to celebrate 65 years of advocacy and support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families throughout New York State.

This year, NYSARC, Inc. celebrates its 65th Anniversary and in recognition of this important milestone, NYSARC and its chapters supported two bike rides that began from opposite ends of New York state on June 30.

The downstate riders biked from the Montauk Point Lighthouse as AHRC Suffolk began *Together to Albany*. While in Tonawanda, disabilities advocates John Robinson and Doug Hamlin left Niawanda Park on a 365-mile bike ride as part of *Journey Along the Erie Canal II*.

Along both routes, NYSARC chapters throughout the state conducted walks and bike rides featuring flag exchange ceremonies.

The celebration culminated July 11th with the two journeys meeting on the east steps of the Capitol followed by an inspiring ceremony. OPWDD Acting Commissioner Kerry Delaney and state Health Secretary Courtney Burke



More than 1200 people from NYSARC Chapters statewide celebrate NYSARC's 65th Anniversary at the Capitol steps in Albany, NY.

were among the well-wishers who spoke to an emotional crowd.

A video of the ceremony is available on the NYSARC site at: <http://bit.ly/1pcYvaO>

Videos from the bike rides can be seen at: <http://bit.ly/1pcYvaO>



Artful Joy

Joy Pendlebury is a dedicated artist in the Lexington - Fulton County Chapter of NYSARC, Inc.'s Creative Expressions art program. Joy works hard to develop her own style and has an eye for design and color along with a keen ability to see what changes need to be made in order to make her work the best that it can be. She welcomes input from others and actually enjoys the critiquing portion of class time. Her painting, "Diva," was recently selected as the cover artwork for the ARC Otsego's VOICE, which was an incredible honor for Joy. This year marks the VOICE's tenth anniversary celebrating the creative voices of artists with disabilities. An exhibition and reception were held at the Martin Mullen Gallery at SUNY Oneonta on July 18th where Joy and many other talented artists displayed their work. Joy and her art were praised during the awards ceremony. ■



1: Joy Pendlebury
 2: "Flowers for Mom"
 3: "Two Fish"
 4: Voice! Event Poster



We Want to Hear from You!

Send us your story ideas, events, pictures and artwork for the chance to be featured in the People First newsletter.

Mail to: Communications Office, NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities, 44 Holland Avenue, Albany, NY 12229 or email: Communications.Office@opwdd.ny.gov. You can also follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NYSOPWDD>. ■

Crisis Response Pilot Program Launches in Western New York

The Western New York and Finger Lakes region recently became the first area to launch NY START



(Systemic Therapeutic Assessment Resources and Treatment), a pilot program that will provide community-based crisis response and prevention services to individuals with developmental disabilities and behavioral health needs.

The START model, which was first developed in Massachusetts, is being launched across New York in phases with the Capital District, Hudson Valley, and Taconic areas scheduled next for launch in late October 2014.

The program's goal is to provide response and prevention services to individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities and behavioral health needs, as well as their families and those who provide support within the community.

The NY START program will provide training, consultation, therapeutic services and technical assistance to enhance the ability of the community to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and complex behavioral health needs, and focuses on establishing integrated services with agency providers. Providing supports that help individuals to remain in their home or community placement is NY START's first priority.

Visit <http://on.ny.gov/1oCnTY9> to access NY START services or for more information. ■



From our Family to Yours!

Over the summer, a few members of the OPWDD Communications Team had the great pleasure of spending a day with six incredible people who are participating in the Family Care program. Pedro and Edward are Family Care providers who opened their home ten years ago to four individuals.

The Family Care program provides community-based residential housing in certified private homes for individuals with developmental disabilities. By providing the support, guidance and companionship of a family, the Family Care program fosters a caring and stable home environment for children, adolescents and adults.

We had a great time talking to the guys (as Pedro fondly refers to them) and hearing about their hobbies, their involvement in the community and most of all, their special relationships with each other. Pedro provided us with some fantastic insights into Family Care that we wanted to share with you in his own words:

"As Family Care providers, it is important for us to know that we are not alone but we have a team supporting us to help us accomplish our mission."

"We opened the doors of our home about ten years ago, and in return

the individuals that joined our family gave us their love, friendship and respect."

"We hope that the Family Care Program grows and expands. In some ways, it is still the best kept secret and such a great program should be better known."

"The input that we receive from people in our community is overwhelmingly positive. Directly and indirectly, we (both as providers and individuals) are educating the general population about the real faces of people living with disabilities."

"The name of the program says it all: FAMILY CARE, pretty soon the guys living with us became members of our family. We believe that no other program creates bonds and everlasting relationships like Family Care."

For information about becoming a Family Care provider, visit <http://on.ny.gov/1qrXORn> ■



Welcome to the Second Edition of People First News!



We hope you enjoyed our first issue, and we appreciate all of your stories, pictures and support for this publication. We are excited to share OPWDD's upcoming initiatives and events, and celebrate the accomplishments of the individuals we serve and the staff who support them.

As the air gets cooler and the leaves start to change, we invite you to take advantage of all of the opportunities that New York has to offer. Fall is a great time for going pumpkin picking, tasting apple cider and enjoying our state's scenic landscapes. Check out these sites for more ideas on how to enjoy this colorful season.

The I Love NY Page

Check out the fall section at <http://bit.ly/1wirzDy> for information on the colorful nature trails you can visit this season.

Apple Picking

Apple picking is a favorite for many this season – for a list of the orchards around the state visit <http://bit.ly/X7ISMA>

Halloween

Looking for pumpkin patches and other fun Halloween activities?

Visit <http://bit.ly/1AGv8nG> ■

Abilities at Work

OPWDD will honor selected businesses for their commitment to workforce diversity at the annual Works For Me business recognition event at the New York State Museum on November 6, 2014.

People with disabilities are valued members and a growing segment of our state's vibrant workforce. The businesses recognized through the Works For Me program know that hiring individuals with developmental disabilities is great for business – and the tax credits included in the 2014 NYS Budget have made it even better. ■



October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

For additional information on how employing individuals with developmental disabilities makes good business sense, please visit our website at: <http://on.ny.gov/1qrZt9q>

Election Day is just around the corner!

All Americans 18 and older have the right to vote, including people with developmental disabilities. OPWDD is committed to ensuring that voting rights are upheld for the people we serve, and that every person is given the opportunity to register to vote.

Voting is an excellent way for individuals to feel empowered and participate in their communities. Individuals with developmental disabilities can make informed choices about the people they would like representing them in government so that issues important to them receive attention.

OPWDD is here to help individuals register to vote, and to help ensure that the voting process runs as smoothly as possible. The OPWDD website provides information about how to register, how to vote, voter access needs, and the names of voting coordinators you can speak to within your region. For more information on voting rights and processes visit:

<http://on.ny.gov/1pX3ooA>

Voter Registration forms must be postmarked no later than October 10th to be eligible to vote in the General Election on November 4, 2014. ■



Camp Wilton was in bloom this summer thanks to the generosity of a local business. Country Garden Greenhouse donated these beautiful flowers and plan to make it an annual tradition! ■

Governor Cuomo Proclaims September 7-13th DSP Week!

Each and every day, more than 90,000 direct support professionals across New York carry out our mission to help individuals with developmental disabilities live richer lives. From September 7-13, OPWDD joined Governor Andrew Cuomo and organizations nationwide to pay special tribute to these professionals by celebrating Direct Support Professionals Week.

During this week, an outstanding group of DSPs from throughout New York State were chosen to be honored. They provide a broad range of supports to help keep individuals with disabilities connected to their families and live successfully in their communities, often putting the needs of others above their own.

Congratulations to these OPWDD Direct Support Professionals of 2014, and thank you to ALL of New York's DSPs for your commitment to those you support.



Kimberly Abbott

"The smiles you get to see from everyone's achievements is a reward that is priceless."



Deborah (Debi) Lee

"Debi gives top-quality care to the individuals we serve ensuring their dignity is maintained. She is courteous, respectful and professional."



Patricia Whaley

"Although it is my responsibility to help each individual become increasingly independent, throughout each day we create memories and become a family. I cannot think of anything more rewarding than that."



Arthur Danelli

"Arthur goes above and beyond despite his own personal challenges to ensure the safety and security of individuals and staff alike."



Phillip Guglielmo

"My favorite part of being a DSP is seeing a smiling face on an individual after they did something they had never experienced before and how happy they become to have had the opportunity to try new things."



Theodore Ward

"Ted is constantly stepping up and helping others whenever the need presents itself -- usually, you don't even have to ask for his help! He is truly loved by his peers and the individuals he cares for."



Matthew Spellicy

"The most rewarding part of being a DSA is knowing you're helping an individual that might not be able to help themselves with daily life skills. Although in words they might not be able to express their gratitude, a simple smile or laugh says it all!"



Darlene Zaidan

"Darlene says the best part of her job is helping people to help themselves and to be the best that they can be."



Jennifer Aldridge

"Respite has provided a place for people to come and stay in a safe environment and gives them, along with their families, a much needed break. I am proud of the work I have done in this program."



Theresa Coonrad

"Theresa is always advocating on their behalf for their needs, actively engaging them in their community and assuring that they are recognized and not ignored when people visit the house or when they are out and about. She's a strong advocate for individuals' needs."



Theo Mosher

"Theo can always be seen with a smile on his face and is always positive despite the many stressors of the job."



Ariel Moronta

"Ariel is humble and dedicated, always calmly willing to help and do anything needed. His kind, gentle and respectful manner is appreciated by the individuals who live at Birch as well as his coworkers. He truly puts people first naturally."



Julio Vargas

“Of the 30 years Julio has been working for the state, 23 years have been at this

residence, quite a long time even for a people person who always seems to enjoy his working day with both staff and individuals he serves.”



Lawrence Larrabee

“Larry’s knowledge and willingness to assist in any way has assured that the

gentlemen at Clove Valley IRA continue to live a safe and healthy life.”



Valora Jones

“The most rewarding part of being a DSP is to see how individuals have

progressed in their independence and seeing them happy in their home environment.”



Lena Starke

“I enjoy working with the individuals we serve. I like to help them solve their

problem of the day. I want to provide them with a safe and inviting environment. I want them to have a smile on their face every day and if they don’t I want to know why and offer any help I can to make their day better.”



Annette Thomas

“The most rewarding part of being a DSP is knowing that I can work with a fellow

human being to help that person achieve different milestones so that they can live a rich and purposeful life within their intellectual ability in this society.”



Dropatie Nulchand

“The most rewarding part of being a DSO is seeing my individuals’ eyes

light up when they see me come through the door, and to see them smile when you do little things for them.”



Korin Woolridge

“The individuals we serve represent all levels of functioning from mild to the

most challenging of behaviors, but this presents no deterrent or pause in her relentless, tireless efforts to facilitate memorable events and activities. Korin maintains a standard as a role model that enables everyone, staff and individuals, to stay on track in their efforts to engage the individuals in their completion of outcomes, residential life plans, and maintaining family connections, while staying mindful of their own personal interests and preferences in life.”



Vimala Alex

“The most rewarding part of the job is enriching the lives of the individuals each day by being there for them and caring for them.”



Charlene Henry

“It is rewarding to know that I have learned to be patient

and more understanding. I’ve learned how to cope with difficult circumstances and am better prepared to help the individuals we serve.”



Michelle King

“The most rewarding part of being a DSP is the joy I feel when the individuals are

happy. I do this job not for the pay; it is from my heart. This could be one of my family members here and I would want them cared for just as how I do it. I feel you have to want to do this job and want to always show self improvement. I love the individuals that I work with and have a great amount of passion to care for others.”



Belinda Sims York

“I enjoy the different personalities of the individuals. I like to come to work to

motivate the individuals to achieve their goals so that they can eventually move on to the community.”



Melissa Jones-Watkin

“Melissa has worked for the respite homes for over ten years.

During this time she has done whatever it takes to make our program a quality one. Whatever need arises, Melissa is more than willing to do what needs to be done. She is conscientious, dedicated, reliable and most importantly compassionate.” ■





Promoting Positive Relationships

The Office for People With Developmental Disabilities has begun its transition to a new training curriculum called PROMOTE which stands for Positive Relationships Offer More Opportunities to Everyone.

PROMOTE is a multimedia curriculum that focuses on supporting increased connections with others, increased self-confidence and increased relaxation and recreation skills. The PROMOTE course provides direct support professionals the opportunity to see and practice the skills needed to support individuals with developmental disabilities. These skills help staff understand the things that lead to challenging behaviors and the actions they can take to make such crises less likely.

The new training curriculum has been very well received and many staff members have reported positive impacts from the use of the skills learned.

This transition will continue to be phased in over time and will greatly support our efforts to provide a richer, fuller life to the people that we support.

To learn more about PROMOTE, visit <http://on.ny.gov/1rZA34j> ■



IBR hosts Katie!

Katie Couric recently visited our own Institute for Basic Research to interview Dr. Ted Brown about the link between Autism and Fragile X for an upcoming episode of her new show "Katie" for Yahoo.



Become a Senior Companion!

This October marks the 35th Anniversary of the OPWDD Senior Companion Program. The program connects nearly 400 senior companions age 55 and over with over 700 individuals with developmental disabilities throughout the state. Senior companions serve 15-40 hours per week, helping

their companions live as independently as possible by assisting with daily living, socialization and community inclusion.

Art De La Roche has been a senior companion for 22 years, and says that it is the best job he has ever had. He and his companion James spend most of their days enjoying the outdoors.



Art is both a friend and an advocate for James, and says that volunteering as a senior companion has given him a purpose in life.

Claudia has worked closely with her companion, Freddy, for six years. In fact, Claudia insisted that Freddy be a part of her small wedding. Claudia shared how happy she was that Freddy could take part in this special day.



These are two examples of the beautiful bonds our Senior Companions form with the individuals they serve.

If you are interested in learning more about the Senior Companion Program or becoming a Senior Companion, please visit <http://on.ny.gov/1oCovgz> for more information. ■