



Our workforce is the backbone of our agency. In this newsletter, we recognize some of the outstanding Direct Support Professional's (pg. 7) and employees (pg. 12) that make up the OPWDD workforce, providing quality person-centered supports every day to people with developmental disabilities.

A Message from the Acting Commissioner

The last several months have been packed with interaction, feedback and open dialogues with the many people – individuals, family members, advocates, providers and others - interested in the OPWDD service system.

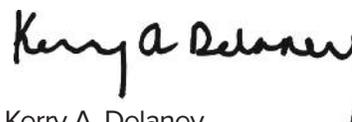
The [Transformation Panel](#) has been meeting for several months to discuss the challenges we face implementing the Transformation Plan into the OPWDD service system, including offering managed care and ensuring long-term fiscal sustainability. We heard your thoughts and concerns at forums across the state and will be using the information you shared to inform the Panel's recommendations which we will share with you early in 2016.

OPWDD issued [draft guidance](#) to assist sheltered workshop providers as they transition to integrated models of employment and held forums across the state to hear your

feedback. The final guidance is expected to be issued by the end of the year.

We held a symposium in early November focused on ensuring that the person-centered outcomes in the transformation agenda can be realized by everyone, including those with complex medical and behavioral support needs.

We look forward to the quickly approaching new year when we will move from dialogue to action on the important issues that matter to you and your loved ones. ■



Kerry A. Delaney
Acting Commissioner

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A Quarter Century of Progress

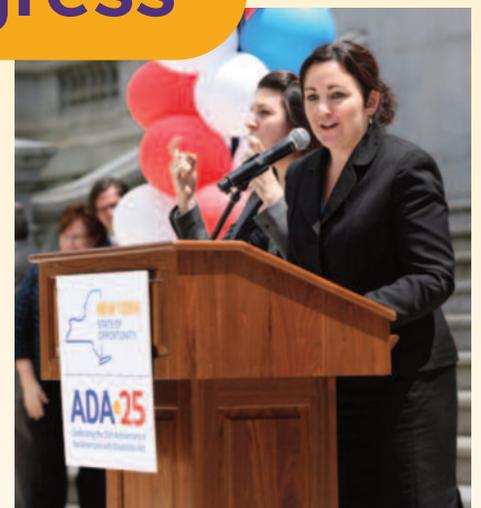
July marked the 25th Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This landmark legislation is the world's first comprehensive law guaranteeing equal rights to people with disabilities, prohibiting discrimination against them, and promoting accessibility to jobs, schools, transportation, communication and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

New York State marked the anniversary with a public celebration in West Capitol Park in Albany on July 24th.

Hundreds gathered to hear the words of leading disability advocates, state agency leaders and those whose lives have changed for the better as a result of the ADA, as well as a live musical performance by the band Flame (whose members are all individuals with disabilities) and enjoy a giant celebratory cake, the handiwork of Schenectady-based Price Chopper Supermarkets.

Governor Cuomo has made New York a national leader on disability rights by promoting key policies and initiatives including the state's comprehensive Olmstead Implementation Plan to serve

individuals with disabilities in the most integrated settings, Executive Order 136 which established the New York Employment First Initiative to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities, and creation of the Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs which protects the safety and civil rights of New Yorkers. ■



ADA 25
AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES ACT
1990-2015



BRINGING HOME THE GOLD

Being selected to participate in the Special Olympics World Games is an honor of a lifetime, but imagine bringing home the gold like the Hudson Valley Unified Basketball Team. Coach Teresa Gilli summed up the experience, “We all had one purpose in mind, to give athletes the joy, unity and recognition they deserve. To let them know they are wonderful, and that they can achieve anything in life that they want.”

Unified Sports joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. It was inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding. Teams are made up of people of similar age and ability, which makes practices more fun and games more challenging and exciting for all. Having a sport in common is just one more way that preconceptions and false ideas are swept away.

After the World Games ended, partner athletes and coaches were eager to share how playing on the unified team changed their lives. "Playing basketball for this team

has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life,” partner Brendan Murphy said. “I started working with Special Olympics because I was told that these athletes needed partners to help them reach their full potential on and off the court. Now, after playing with this team for a year, I realized that we partners need these athletes in our lives just as much as, if not more than, they need us in their lives.”

Tennis star Tom Adimari also won the gold medal in the Men’s B Division, defeating athletes from Morocco and Austria. He won a silver medal in the doubles division.

Congratulations to the athletes, their families, and coaches for their remarkable achievements. ■





From left to right is Macey Dow (Harriet's great granddaughter), Dee Clark (Harriet's daughter), Harriet Sabo, Norman Rockhill (Family Care resident), Eric Dow (Harriet's grandson - Dee's son) and Dawn Dow (Eric's wife).

We are Family...

After dedicating more than three decades to putting people and family first, 89-year-old Harriet Sabo of Massena, NY is retiring as a Family Care provider.

Sabo and her husband, Ted, first became involved in the Family Care program in 1980 when she saw it mentioned in her church bulletin, a bulletin which she still has to this day. She continued to provide Family Care after her husband passed away several years ago.

Sabo has had as many as three individuals in her home at one time and the first person who came to live in her home 35 years ago, Norman, still lives with her.

Norman came from a home setting that was dysfunctional and abusive. He arrived at her home with just the clothes on his back and very few personal belongings. A few days later, he had a beautiful wardrobe and was getting settled into the Sabo Family Care home. He has become such an integral part of this family that plans have been made to ensure Norman's burial in the Sabo family plot when he passes away.

"Family Care means everything to me," Sabo said. "I don't know what I would do without him (Norman). We

are family. Norman is like my own child." She added, "He is very caring and kind, always willing to help in any way he can."

Norman is not only part of Sabo's life, but the rest of her family as well. Her daughter, grandchildren and great-grandchildren look forward to seeing him every time they visit. Sabo's daughter, Dee Clark, said Norman played with her children Eric and Megan when they were little kids and taught them how to play the games he knew.

Community integration was part of the Sabo's mindset three decades ago and Mr. and Mrs. Sabo made sure people residing in their home were included in community activities. In fact, on most Sundays, Mr. Sabo would bring the men of the house to the American Legion Post, which was a special outing for them.

OPWDD Family Care Coordinator Jim Triolo said "Harriet Sabo knows the true meaning of what Family Care is all about. For Harriet, it was providing a loving home where the people in her care became part of her family, her children's family and her grandchildren's family. It was important for Harriet that the people in her care experienced all the

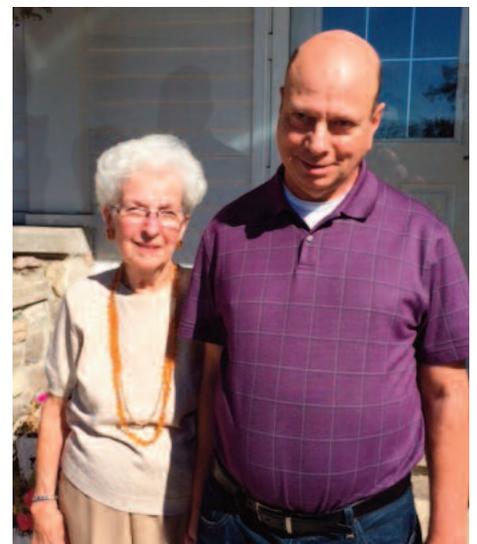
community had to offer and, in turn, developed their own interest in participating in many community organizations."

Although Mrs. Sabo has a positive attitude when she discusses Norman moving to a new Family Care home, there is a softening of her voice and a tear in her eye. The love in this home and within this family is evident. Norman has grown up with the love, respect and compassion that everyone deserves. As much as Norman has been given, Mrs. Sabo and her family feel that Norman has given them even more.

About Family Care

OPWDD's Family Care program has been providing people with developmental disabilities community-based residential housing in certified private homes since 1931. 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.

To learn more about the Family Care program call OPWDD's Information Line at 866-946-9733 voice, or 866-933-4889 TTY. You can also visit OPWDD's Web site at <http://www.opwdd.ny.gov> or call your local OPWDD Developmental Disabilities Regional Office. ■



Harriet and Norman

NDEAM Works for Me

October was the 70th observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) during which we celebrated the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities. The theme for this year was *My Disability is One Part of Who I Am*.

For the past eight years, OPWDD has marked the occasion with its annual Works for Me event which honors select employers throughout New York State who have demonstrated a great commitment to workforce diversity through the hiring of talented employees with developmental disabilities.

This year's winners were honored at the [Works for Me Awards Ceremony](#) at the NYS Museum in Albany. They are:



Small Business

[Northland Veterinary Hospital](#), Gouverneur, NY



Medium Business

[General Control Systems](#), Green Island, NY



Large Business

[Oneida Savings Bank](#), Oneida, NY



Corporate Partner

[Walmart](#), Springville, NY



Not-for-profit/ Government Business

[The New School](#), New York, NY



Youth Transition

[Syracuse City School District/
Onondaga Community College](#), Syracuse, NY



Honorable Mention went to:

Small Business

Niblack Foods, Rochester, NY

Medium Business

Scotch N Sirloin, Buffalo, NY

Corporate Partner

Burger King, Gloversville, NY

Not-for-profit/ Government Business

Westfield Academy, Westfield, NY

Congratulations to all of the outstanding businesses and employees that have been honored this year. Your hard work, dedication and support are contributing to New York's vibrant economy and helping to enrich lives. ■



Heidi's Observations Come to Life

Many people are very observant of their environment and surroundings, but few are able to translate observations to paint and paper like Heidi Schroder of Delmar, who has been interpreting her experiences and thoughts through art for years.

Heidi, 37, has created dozens of paintings of whimsical characters and animals through her art classes at Living Resources' Carriage House Art Center. She paints freehand and often uses her computer to search for new ideas. Her work has been displayed throughout the Capital Region and beyond at such locations as the Bethlehem Library, Puzzles Café, SUNY Oneonta, the Sagamore, the Troy Arts Center, and more.

A successful artist, most of Heidi's work sells for between \$250 and \$350; some of the proceeds go to the Carriage House to pay for materials, while the rest is for Heidi to spend on gifts, shopping, riding lessons and entertainment.

According to her mom, Joanne Longo, her most noted and awarded work is "The Porcupine," which won second place and was featured on the NYS Cerebral Palsy Association's Visions of New York poster in 2010. Her "Three Owls" work is featured on coasters currently for sale at the Albany Visitors Center. Her "Squirrel" is featured on writing paper sold by the Down Syndrome Footprint organization.

Heidi's artistic style changed recently when she began incorporating people in her work, and found immediate success when "The Dance" was selected by the Center for Disability Services as the agency's entry in the 2015 Visions of NY contest. Heidi also recently began expanding her creativity to other art forms including sculpture and crafts, but readily admits that it is exclusively at the Carriage House where she paints, thanks in a large part to an environment very conducive to artists, the support of instructors, and the availability of appropriate supplies and materials.

Be on the lookout as Heidi will soon be unveiling her current work she is entitling "The Titanic." ■



OPWDD Recognizes Outstanding DSPs

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. OPWDD joined Governor Andrew Cuomo and organizations nationwide to pay special tribute to these professionals by celebrating Direct Support Professionals Week September 13-19.

They provide a broad range of supports to help keep individuals with disabilities connected to their families, be empowered to make their own choices and live successfully in their communities. DSPs are advocates, mentors, role models and teachers, often putting the needs of others above their own.

Congratulations to these OPWDD Direct Support Professionals of 2015, and thank you to ALL of New York's DSPs for your commitment to those you support. Be sure to visit our [DSP Wall of Fame](#) on the OPWDD website to be inspired by stories about this year's honorees. ■

DDSOO 1 (Western)

Tammy Anderson
Direct Support Assistant

DDSOO 1 (Finger Lakes)

Marie McFarland
Developmental Assistant 2

DDSOO 2 (Broome)

Trudy Peterson
Direct Support Assistant

DDSOO 2 (Central)

Kristen Archer
Direct Support Assistant

Robert LaClaire
Direct Support Assistant

DDSOO 3 (Capital)

Sandra Walker
Developmental Assistant 2

DDSOO 3 (Sunmount)

Brittany Grenon
Direct Support Assistant

DDSOO 4 (Hudson Valley)

Alicia Copeland
Developmental Assistant 2

Jean Saint-Louis
Direct Support Assistant

Moses Obare
Direct Support Assistant

DDSOO 4 (Taconic)

Jose Nevarez, Jr., Direct Support Assistant

DDSOO 5 (Brooklyn)

Howard Hemphill
Direct Support Assistant

Jacqueline Paillant
Direct Support Assistant

DDSOO 5 (Metro)

Wilfredo Laureta
Direct Support Assistant

Cassana Mullins
Developmental Assistant 1

DDSOO 5 (Staten Island)

Bruce Dudley
Direct Support Assistant

Michael Iteme
Direct Support Assistant

DDSOO 6 (Bernard Fineson)

Sharon Marshall
Developmental Assistant 3

Diane White
Developmental Assistant 2

DDSOO 6 (Long Island)

Brenda Hicks
Developmental Assistant 3

Harold Rivers
Direct Support Assistant



Artists from the Riverside Art Program stopped by OPWDD's Broome State Operations Office to see their artwork on display. The artists created various pieces of art in different media which they donated for display in 6 offices across the service area.

Independence Through Inclusive Employment



Submitted by HeartShare Human Services

HeartShare Human Services of New York values skills attainment and empowerment for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. HeartShare's transformative approach has changed Darron's life.

Darron participates in HeartShare's Kaleidoscope Program, which provides opportunities for supported employment based on the individual's personal interests and employment goals. HeartShare Employment Specialists serve as job coaches at employment sites ranging from retail and clerical jobs to cleaning and maintenance.

Through preparation at the Kaleidoscope Program, Darron was able to become one of the first employees of Cleaning with

Meaning, a new "green" home and office cleaning business serving the five boroughs of New York City and nearby counties. The company was founded last year by HeartShare and its partners and business associates at the New York Integrated Network for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (NYIN). The agencies participating in Cleaning with Meaning include HeartShare, The Institutes of Applied Human Dynamics (IAHD), Services for the UnderServed, Lifespire, Westchester Jewish Community Services and United Cerebral Palsy of New York City.

Cleaning with Meaning is a business model that enables adults with disabilities to successfully enter the workforce. During his training to become a cleaning technician, Darron energetically learned the application and use of different cleaning materials and equipment in residential, office and programmatic environments. All employees also receive a uniform and employee identification card. Employees like Darron are then paired with a cleaning professional who serves as an on-site supervisor and co-worker. Together, the duo tackles a repertoire of work, including home and office cleaning, move-in and

move-out cleaning, post-construction cleaning, and even exterior cleaning at MCU Park in Coney Island, home of the Brooklyn Cyclones. "This is the best job I've ever had," said Darron, who has prior work experience at a restaurant.

"As more and more individuals are equipped with skills to work, we not only enhance their quality of life, but also are shifting paradigms," explained HeartShare Kaleidoscope Program Director Joy Palmer. "Everyone has a right to work in a competitive, inclusive environment."

"Since he started at Cleaning with Meaning, Darron has asked to take on more responsibilities. This means being entrusted with additional maintenance sites weekly," said HeartShare Employment Specialist Joseph McCrae. "Darron, like any of us, is proud to be more independent in providing for himself and to exercise the right to budget what he earns."

Darron also resides at one of HeartShare's supervised residences in Canarsie, Brooklyn, where his team of direct support professionals support him in increasing his independence and realizing his dreams. ■



LIT Mountaineers Take the Bronze at 2015 Area 27 Softball Tournament

Looking for disability news and events?

The New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council has launched a new disability news site, Disability News New York. Disability News New York is a one stop source for disability news, events, and information. The site is free and open to the public. To receive monthly updates on disability news and events, subscribe to their mailing list at:

http://disabilitynews.ny.gov/mailling_list_signup or visit their site at <http://disabilitynews.ny.gov/>..■

Coordinated Care Announced for Areas of New York State

OPWDD has joined together with the NYS Department of Health (DOH), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and Partners Health Plan to provide more coordinated care through a program known as Fully Integrated Duals Advantage (FIDA-IDD).

The FIDA-IDD will offer more opportunities for people to direct their own services, be involved in care planning and live independently in the community. New York State and CMS are contracting with Partners Health Plan to offer this FIDA-IDD program to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid services in New York City, Long Island, Rockland and Westchester Counties. The target start date for enrollment of the program is April 1, 2016.

OPWDD has been working for several years towards models that will allow us to coordinate care in holistic ways to better meet the needs of people with developmental disabilities.

Managed care for OPWDD services is currently being reviewed for how it could best be implemented in New York State. The FIDA-IDD program was designed with considerable stakeholder input, and its launch will inform discussions about managed care moving forward.

Visit the OPWDD website for more information about [FIDA-IDD](#). ■

Hands-On Training

The grounds and facilities of OPWDD's Institute for Basic Research (IBR) saw marked improvements last spring from the efforts of students enrolled in a facility maintenance program IBR is hosting. The program is conducted by the New York City Department of Education School of Cooperative Technical Education (Co-op Tech), which offers students hands-on training in skilled trades.

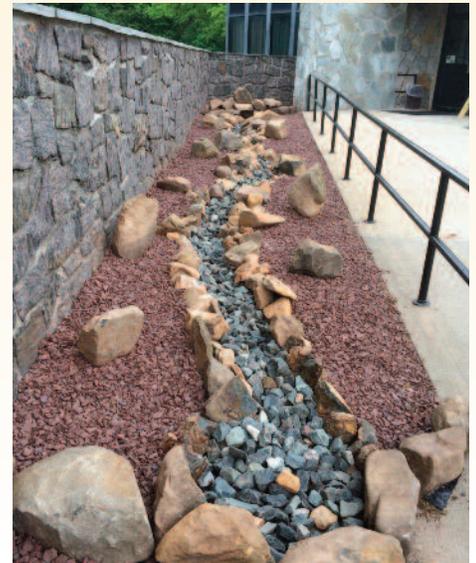
Co-op Tech is a half-day vocational program operating on a semester basis. Students are 16 to 21 years of age, with varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds, ability levels and educational histories. For the program at IBR, Co-op Tech, Parent to Parent NY, Inc. and NYCDOE Tottenville High School collaborated to provide high school seniors with work-based (hands-on) opportunities as part of their school day.

Approximately 40% of the students who participated in the program at the IBR work site in the spring 2015 semester have a developmental disability.

Students at the IBR training site learned carpentry, environmental landscaping, painting and custodial skills. Among their projects on the IBR campus were debris- and overgrowth-clearing, landscaping, rock installations and installation of wooden benches. They also installed at the main entrance a 9/11 memorial constructed of stainless steel by students at Co-op Tech's Manhattan site.

One of the successes of the program is that it provides students the opportunity to learn a skill for future employment. Most members of the spring 2015 class have moved on to employment in the skilled trades. Some have enrolled in skilled pre-apprentice programs to prepare for union jobs.

"I learned people skills as well as job skills," said Victor of his experience in the Co-op Tech facility maintenance program. "The program taught me the trades I need to know, and I learned how to work well with others.... I look forward to continuing my education in carpentry and building a future career." ■



Plant...Grow...Give

A Creative Way to Make a Difference in the Urban Jungle

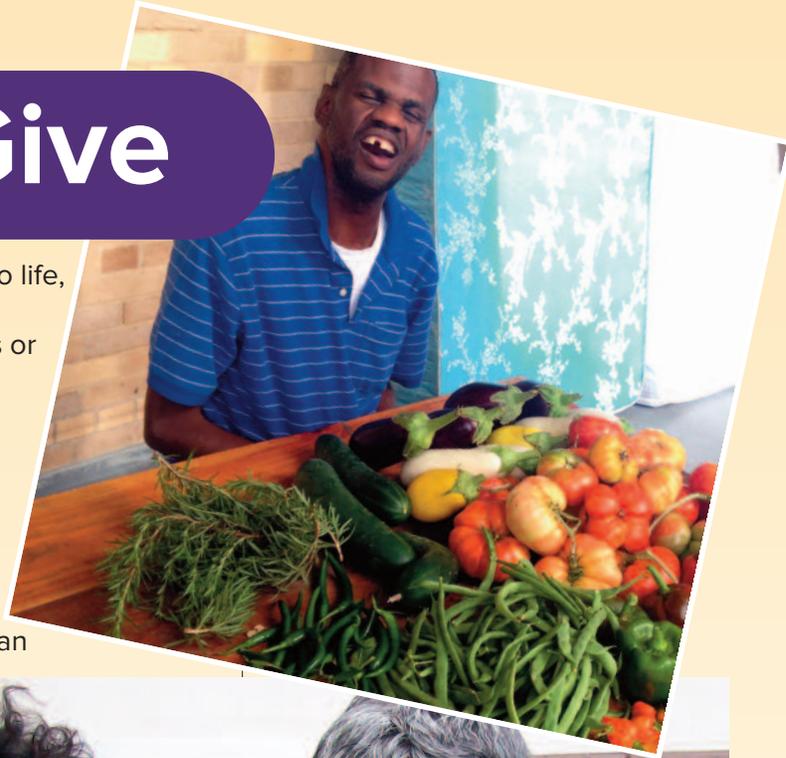
Submitted by Mercy Home

The Plant, Grow and Give Program at Mercy Home, Brooklyn is about people with developmental challenges utilizing their skills and resources to plant vegetable gardens, collect the harvest and donate the produce to underserved families, food pantries and shelters in their communities where the need is greatest.

The program began in 2012 after direct support professionals and supervisory staff met with many of the individuals in Mercy Home's residences to discuss ways to be more involved in the community. Giving back has always been a part of the Mercy tradition, still, the residents wanted to make an "impact" in their communities.

nurses them back to life, distributing them to local senior centers or nursing facilities.

Since its inception, the group has donated more than 1,600 pounds of vegetables. This year alone, they distributed more than



618 pounds of fresh vegetables while also volunteering to deliver the produce to their partners.

Members of the Day Habilitation Without Walls program operate the greenhouse and provide other Mercy sites with starter plants to begin their own on-site urban gardens. At some sites, special planters were created allowing individuals with wheelchairs or other assistive devices to fully participate in the program. When the harvest is over, the group rescues plants that were not sold from places like Home Depot and

This has formed lasting bonds and friendships in the community, but, most importantly, has made an impact on the lives of others. Talks are under way to share the Plant, Grow, Give concept with other organizations and perhaps develop a farm stand that local communities could access as well. To find out more about this program visit

www.mercyhome.org. ■



Home and life Sharing



Submitted by Lifetime Assistance, Inc.

Devon Quinsland and Kerry Erb are a true testament to strength, love and lifelong friendship.

These remarkable young women originally met through mutual family friends as energetic 5-year-olds and have since followed a path through life's ups and downs that has kept them closely connected. Both Devon and Kerry were born with developmental disabilities, and they have an extraordinary ability to listen, understand and relate to each other in a unique way. Dr. LK Quinsland, Devon's father, says, "The ladies know each other very well, in ways we can't even comprehend."

Although their paths have separated from time to time, Devon and Kerry have remained close. For most of us, a natural progression into adulthood is moving out of our childhood home. Devon's parents wanted her to experience that same independence, but with the necessary support available. Dr. Quinsland and his wife, Anne VanGinkel, decided to investigate a new opportunity for their daughter - one that would give Devon the ability to live with her best friend Kerry, while receiving the necessary care and support in

each of their daily lives.

Dr. Quinsland turned to Lifetime Assistance for guidance, and inquired about the possibility of the agency overseeing a home purchased by him and his wife. Devon and Kerry would share their home with a certified Family Care provider who would be available 24 hours a day to assist them as needed. With the support of the families and the Family Care team at Lifetime Assistance Inc., they researched similar models in other states and presented the idea of having a certified Family Care provider move into the ladies' home to the local office of the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities.

Working with the Quinsland and Erb families, numerous meetings and discussions occurred to forge ahead with this new concept - now referred to as "Home and Life Sharing," and early this spring, Devon, Kerry and their puppy officially moved into their new home in Chili, where their care provider has her own suite, but is close by to care for the ladies.

The families, Lifetime Assistance and New York State are incredibly proud of this new Home and Life Sharing opportunity, which has the potential to open many doors and help other individuals. ■

OPWDD Hosts Symposium on Supporting Complex Needs

Ensuring that people with complex behavioral and medical needs are included in New York's transformation was the focus of a symposium the OPWDD hosted on Nov. 5, which drew 250 participants in person and an additional 1,000 online viewers.

"It's our goal to ensure that person-centered outcomes and the benefits of the transformation can be realized by all those served in our system who wish to take advantage of them," said Acting Commissioner Kerry A. Delaney. "And that includes people with complex medical and behavior support needs."

Self-advocates, families, direct support professionals, practitioners, researchers and policymakers took part in the day-long symposium, which included a keynote address titled "Responding to Change. Shaping the Future" by Mary Lee Fay, Executive Director of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services.

Maximizing technology was the focus of an afternoon general session, presented by David O'Hara, Interim President and CEO, and Izel Obermeyer, Director of the Assistive Technology Program, from the Westchester Institute for Human Development.

Breakout sessions focused on Self-Direction, Workforce Transformation, Employment and Meaningful Community Activities, Innovations in Community Living and Shifting Service Models for Complex Needs.

Information on how to view all sessions and download symposium materials are now posted on the [OPWDD website](#). ■

2015 Employees of the Year

OPWDD is one of the largest agencies in New York State, with over 1,300 different worksites and nearly 22,000 employees. As an agency, we have tremendous responsibility for supporting thousands of men and women who have developmental disabilities, both directly and in support and management activities.

All of our employees play an important role in helping the individuals we support to live in the community, have access to good healthcare, enjoy meaningful relationships with friends and family, and participate fully through association, volunteerism, and work.

OPWDD recently honored 23 people who were selected as [Employees of the Year](#) from their respective DDSOs, DDROs, the Institute for Basic Research, and Central Office. The honorees by region are:

DDSOO 1

Finger Lakes

Charlene Carpenter
Developmental Assistant 2

Western

George Jablonski
Habilitation Specialist 2

DDSOO 2

Central

Angela Yacano
Direct Support Assistant

Broome

Trudy Peterson
Direct Support Assistant

DDSOO 3

Capital

Cynthia Secor
Direct Support Assistant

Sunmount

Andrew DeVirgeles
Developmental Assistant 3

DDSOO 4

Taconic

Anne Maresca
Developmental Assistant 2

Hudson Valley

Karl Koller
Business Officer II

DDSOO 5

Brooklyn

Quantae Davis
Direct Support Assistant

Staten Island

Nandana Rajapaksha
Direct Support Assistant

Metro

Rodriguez, Direct Support Assistant

DDSOO 6

Bernard Fineson

Gwendolyn Culpepper
Recreation Assistant

Long Island

Minnie Alexandre, L.P.N.

DDRO 1

Linda George
Administrative Aide, Regional Office

Angela Czerkas
DDPS I, Self-Direction

DDRO 2

Central

Patricia Gallivan
LMSW 2 – Clinical Administrator,
Service Access Team

Sunmount

Sandy Wilkins, Secretary 1

DDRO 3

Capital

Jacquelyn Parten, Psychologist 2

Taconic

Mary Grace Collins, Contract Manager

DDRO 4

Metro

Stephenie Rozzell, Self-Direction
Supervisor

DDRO 5

Long Island

Ava Gruttadauria, DDPS 2 –
Willowbrook Liaison, Director of
Special Projects

IBR

Edmund Bilak, Laboratory Technician

Central Office

Eileen Bureau, Principle Health Care
Fiscal Analyst



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>. ■



Career Opportunities

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- Psychologist
- Registered Nurse (RN)
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)

For more information:

Central Office, Office of Human Resources:

1-866-946-9733

or OPWDD.Human.Resources@opwdd.ny.gov

NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)
Central Office, Office of Human Resources, Albany, NY 12229



Office for People With
Developmental Disabilities

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