



# People First

News and Information for the OPWDD Community | Winter 2014



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Outdoors this  
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The staff and individuals at the home on Big Tree Road in Hamburg, NY with Governor Andrew M. Cuomo after he and members of the National Guard helped dig out the home during the November snow storm. Pictured from left to right: Chuck Rizzo, Erie County Executive Mark Polencarz, Christen Wiesner, Governor Cuomo, Stacey Pettigrew, James Paciorek and Vernon Billups (seated).



## A Message from the Acting Commissioner

As 2014 comes to a close, I am reminded of the significant ways in which together we have provided greater opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to live the life they want to live. Throughout numerous changes and challenges, we never lost sight of what's really important in our day-to-day work.

I would like to especially recognize and thank all of the staff in the areas recently affected by the lake effect snow in Western and Northern New York that worked tirelessly around the clock to care for the individuals we serve. Many of you put aside your own needs and the needs of your own

families to keep the individuals we serve safe. Your selfless actions and dedication are an inspiration to your peers and everyone in the state.

As we ring in the New Year, I look forward to our continued fulfillment of our mission to help people with developmental disabilities live richer lives. Best wishes to all for a happy and healthy New Year. ■

Kerry A. Delaney  
Acting Commissioner

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# Get Outdoors This Winter

Individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities are thriving in a winter wonderland of sports activities thanks to the help of organizations in New York State that support, train and encourage participation.

On February 5th the torch will be lit in Lake Placid signaling the start of the 2015 Empire State Winter Games. For three decades, the Games have brought together athletes from across the state in 19 winter sports, and more recently, adaptive competition. Adaptive sports and recreation programs are recreational activities that are modified or designed to allow people with disabilities to participate.

This year's Empire State Winter Games will feature adaptive competition in several events including: Cross Country Skiing, Biathlon, Alpine Beginner/Assisted Mixing Bowl, Alpine Intermediate and Sled Hockey. Participation in the adaptive category doubled from 2013 to 2014 and organizers are hoping the numbers increase again for the 2015 competition.

Some of the increased interest in participation may be due to organizations like the Adaptive



Sports Foundation (ASF) in Windham, N.Y. The organization's work promotes physical activity for children and adults with disabilities. Initially, their work started in the winter sports category, but ASF has spread its wings to offer a summer program as well.

Cherisse Young, the Fundraising & Marketing Director with the Adaptive Sports Foundation, says the organization started in 1984 with 20 volunteer instructors, but that number has grown to 270 volunteers giving 4,000 lessons a year to about 500 individuals.

The range of interest and involvement of each individual varies. Many come to learn a sport so that they can participate with friends and family. Others take a more serious approach and train for competition on regional, state, national and international levels.

Charlie Kleiman is one of the individuals in the competitive program. Charlie, who has Autism, began competing at the local level in the Catskill Mountain Snowboard Series. With a number of first and second place finishes under his belt, Charlie qualified for the United USA Snowboard Association's (USASA) National Championships in 2013 and earned silver in both the Slalom and Giant Slalom Adaptive categories. He returned to the USASA National Championships in 2014.

Young says participating in adaptive sports isn't just about learning a sport or the competition. She says its more



about building confidence and self-esteem and being able to do what everyone else does, with everyone else. "A family is able to enjoy participating in the sport together – not having to use a special chair or a special lift. They (individuals) come out of their shell. It's amazing to see." ■

# Integrated Employment is a Good Reason

An employer in the Hudson Valley is barking up the right tree with its new venture.

In an effort to increase community employment opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities, the not-for-profit provider, Community Based Services, has launched a business employing both people with developmental disabilities and those without. This integrated setting is called Good Reasons and the product they are making, packaging and selling...dog biscuits.

Community Based Services CEO Vicki Sylvester is spearheading the idea that she hopes will fetch enough sales to expand the business and create positions for even more individuals with developmental disabilities. Right

now, she says, there is a 50/50 ratio of employees with and without developmental disabilities who work together to produce and package the products. Currently, there is one full-time and five part-time developmentally disabled salaried individuals on staff with a goal of having ten full-time positions by the early part of 2015.

"I like to say we employ people with all abilities," Sylvester said.

Good Reasons works out of facilities in Poughkeepsie and Brewster and features a Culinary Institute of America alumni for a chef. Allan Katz, develops the healthy dog treat recipes and is in charge of the baking portion of the production line.

Good Reasons is more than just about selling dog treats. Sylvester says having a job in the



community gives individuals a sense of self-esteem and a feeling of belonging. Sarah Fillebrown, a day habilitation assistant who works with the individuals at Good Reasons echoes that sentiment. "A couple of individuals in particular wake up in the morning and want to come to work because they feel like they are making a difference in the world and they have a place." ■



# Works for Me Works for Everyone

The New York State Museum's Huxley Theater in Albany was the setting for the 7th annual OPWDD Works for Me awards ceremony on November 6th.

Works for Me honors businesses across the state committed to workforce diversity and to hiring individuals with developmental disabilities. These businesses recognize the significant contributions that individuals can make in the workplace and that hiring workers with disabilities makes good business sense.

The awards ceremony is not only a celebration of employers, but of the people with developmental disabilities who add to New York State's vibrant workforce and the support staff who make that possible.

This year, OPWDD received 66 nominations in the six Works for Me categories: small business, medium business, large business, government/not-for-profit business, corporate partner and youth transition.



The 2014 honorees are:

**Small Business of the Year:**  
Della's Chocolates, Medina, NY



Susan and Dan Fuller, owners of Della's Chocolates, have been building their chocolate business for the past four years. Since opening in 2011, they have enjoyed serving delectable confections to the community of Medina. Also at their side, helping in that effort, is their only employee, Jennifer Haeberger, who has the enviable job of working with homemade chocolate confections three days a week. Her position includes packaging and making homemade chocolates.

**Medium Business of the Year: The Corporate Source, Mineola, NY**



The Corporate Source provides opportunities for people with disabilities to obtain competitive employment through long-term contracts with government agencies and privately owned businesses. Michael Meyer has been a maintenance worker for the company for five years at the Nassau County Courts, with perfect attendance.

**Large Business of the Year: King Kullen, Bellmore, NY**



King Kullen, hailed as America's first supermarket, has been a major force in the grocery industry on Long Island for more than 80 years. Kelly Kildare has been a cashier at King Kullen's Bellmore, NY store for nearly a year, where she has become a strong presence despite her developmental disability and hearing-impairment. Kelly is a favorite of both co-workers and customers.

**Government/Nonprofit of the Year: Services for the Underserved-Urban Farms, Brooklyn, NY**



Services for the Underserved's Urban Farm Initiative is a program that maintains several community gardens, conducts horticulture workshops and promotes nutrition and healthy eating in the New York Metropolitan area. Phill Cayenne is employed as an assistant at the Urban Farms in Brooklyn where he plants, cares for and harvests fruits and vegetables.

**Corporate Partner of the Year: Modell's Sporting Goods, Brooklyn, NY**



Modell's Sporting Goods is America's oldest, family-owned and operated retailer of sporting goods, athletic footwear, active apparel and fan gear. This major sporting goods chain has over 150 stores across 10 states and the District of Columbia. The company's longest tenured employee at its Bay Parkway location in Brooklyn, NY is Oscar Martinez. Oscar doesn't let his cerebral palsy or his wheelchair get in his way. He has been a valued and hard-working employee at the store for nearly two decades and is well-respected in the community.



**Youth Transition Award: Albany High School, Albany, NY**



Albany High School's Work Experience Program has been training and educating students with developmental disabilities for the past 18 years for employment and life in the community after high school. The school-to-work transition for students begins in 9th grade but it doesn't necessarily end upon high school graduation. Some of the students decide to attend the Sage College Experience at Sage College's Albany campus which provides critical elements of support to students in obtaining a real life, community based and age-appropriate education before fully transitioning to employment. ■



## Greenview Heroes

Three Rome residents with developmental disabilities have been credited with saving the life of the overnight direct support staff at their residence when he suffered a medical emergency. On Sunday, October 19, the OPWDD staff member was assisting the individuals with their nighttime rituals when he experienced a medical emergency and fell to the floor, striking his head and becoming unresponsive. Peter Mihalakos, who has limited verbal skills, directed Debbie O'Rourke to call 911 with his phone. Thanks to their actions, medical personnel arrived on the scene and transported the staff member to the hospital where he was treated and later released.

For their quick response, their calm demeanor, and their watchful support, Peter, Debbie and Shannon Stuart received

certificates of recognition from OPWDD Acting Commissioner Kerry Delaney and Rome Mayor Joseph Fusco.

Representatives from the Rome Fire Department, Lake Delta Fire Department, Oneida County Sheriff's Office, the 911 Call Center, and AmCare Ambulance Service were also on hand to recognize Peter, Debbie, and Shannon.

"As part of our ongoing efforts to help individuals with developmental disabilities to be as independent as possible, we try to teach them to fully know their community and to respond in emergency situations," said Leona Cookinham, treatment team leader



Rome Mayor Joseph Fusco, Peter Mihalakos, Shannon Stuart, Debbie O'Rourke, and first responders Rome Deputy Fire Chief Tom Palinski, AmCare's Jennifer Sanford, and Lake Delta Fire Chief Larry Tamburrino.

with the OPWDD. "Thankfully, we don't often get to test that training, but are grateful that Peter, Debbie, and Shannon knew what to do and followed through. They are model citizens who are to be commended for their actions." ■



OPWDD Acting Commissioner Kerry Delaney takes part in a talk show style interview by the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State's (SANYS) own "Oprah Winfrey" during the organization's 25th Anniversary Conference.

## Exercising Their Right to Vote

Early in 2014, the forty-five members of the North Country Self-Advocates, based in Watertown, N.Y., decided to focus on educating their peers about the importance of voting in local and statewide elections. Members of the group gave brief presentations in Day Habilitation classrooms and used word-of-mouth amongst their peers to accomplish this goal. In July, one of the Self-Advocates picked up 75 registration forms from the Board of Elections. Throughout the summer, individuals helped each other complete the forms and the completed forms were handed in to the Board of Elections in early October. During the weeks before the elections, the Self-Advocates reviewed sample ballots. On Election Day, Jefferson Rehabilitation Center's Day Habilitation staff transported the newly registered voters to the polling places in their local communities and helped them vote, many for the first time.

Click [here](#) for information about your voting rights. ■



Michelle Marra voting at the Adams Center Fire Hall.

## Sometimes All You Need Is Some Healthy Inspiration

When most of us hear the name Chuck Norris, we think of a Texas Ranger, a Delta Force fighter, a martial arts expert, or a fitness guru. To Mickey Satterlee, however, Norris is more than just a legend; he's a friend, thanks to the connection made for Mickey by a staff member.

Kristin Swarts, residential habilitation writer at the OPWDD's State Operations Office 2 in Syracuse, was talking with Mickey about the importance of his health. She was looking for just the right motivation to encourage Mickey to be mindful of diet and exercise and also to wear prescribed compression socks to help his circulation. When she learned that Mickey was a Chuck Norris fan – he has every movie and has seen every episode of Walker: Texas Ranger -- Kristin thought Norris might be just the inspiration Mickey needed. She wrote to him through his fan page

and the response to Mickey was amazing.

Norris sent Mickey a number of things to commemorate his career, including a tee shirt, hat, socks and a framed "Chuck's Principles for Life" poster that provides motivational and inspirational tips on having a positive lifestyle. Mickey's favorite, however, is an autographed and framed photo. Norris also sent Mickey a personal handwritten letter in which he told him, "I have worn special stockings to prevent a blood clot. Will you do me a favor and wear yours? Mickey, I want you to know we will always be friends."

Now Mickey has enjoyed improved overall health. He goes out more, is more active, and no longer needs to wear compression socks. He plans to maintain contact with Norris and he is inspired knowing his friend is only an email away. ■



# 'Tis the season...

for decking the halls, spending time with family and friends, attending festive events and the hustle and bustle of holiday shopping. All it takes is a click of the mouse to find information and helpful tips to make your holiday planning easier and safer:

### **For travel destinations, lodging and events:**

I LOVE NY

<http://www.iloveny.com/>

### **For the latest on traffic conditions and construction areas on state roads:**

N.Y.S. Department of Transportation

<https://www.dot.ny.gov/index>

### **For up-to-date information on construction areas and traffic flow on the Thruway:**

N.Y.S. Thruway Authority

<http://www.thruway.ny.gov/index.shtml>

### **For public transportation schedules in the N.Y. metropolitan area:**

Metropolitan Transit Authority

<http://www.mta.info/>

### **For holiday health and safety tips:**

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/family/holiday/>

### **For holiday decorating safety tips:**

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

<http://www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/121347/611.pdf>



Julie accepts Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State Artist of the Year Award at CP of NYS Annual Awards Dinner, October 20 in Albany

## Western New York Artist Wins Statewide Art Contest

Julie Bissell from Aspire of Western New York was recently chosen winner of the Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State Visions of New York art contest. Her winning creation, "Fire Flowers," is an example of her preference for painting positive, glowing imagery inspired by the natural environment. Her winning entry is the center piece of the annual Visions of New York Poster, which includes all 21 creations submitted by CP of NYS Affiliates from across the state.

Ms. Bissell was among 10 individuals and organizations honored at the CP of NYS Annual Awards Dinner on October 20 at the Hilton Albany Hotel. Bissell works in a variety of artistic mediums at most recently she has taken to composing poetry and plans to make several submissions to the forthcoming *iXpress* Anthology of Poetry entitled, "Phrases and Visions." ■

## A Healthy Education

For the past three years, Christine Cea, PhD, and Steve Holburn, PhD, researchers at OPWDD's Institute for Basic Research (IBR), have been working on a project with the New York City Department of Education District 75 Special Education Programs to implement the Health Advocacy Program for students with developmental disabilities.

The Health Advocacy Program is a multimedia curriculum that was developed in 2008 by Drs. Cea and Holburn and their IBR colleague Anne Gordon, MS Ed, to promote healthy lifestyles for adolescents and adults with developmental disabilities.

The program began with a pilot study at the Richard H. Hungerford School which sought to improve the health and well-being of 35 students. The results of the program showed that students' knowledge increased, their health practices improved, and individual health goals were attained.

Now in its third year, the program includes an annual Hungerford Health Fair that features student-made posters about what was learned during the program and healthy snacks each class prepares. A favorite outcome of the program is the planting of a garden by students, who use the produce in their culinary arts program. Currently, 200 new students are participating in the program, which has expanded to include schools in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island.



Students participating in the Health Advocacy Program (HAP) at the NYC Department of Education Hungerford School, Staten Island, celebrate winning 1st place for their entry—yogurt parfait—in the healthy snack competition at the Hungerford Annual Health Fair. Left to right: Thomas Palmisano; Richard Sydlo; Noor Kahn; chef Rob Burmeister, of the Harvest Café, Staten Island, who judged and determined the winning healthy snack; Lauren Stone, special education teacher and HAP instructor at the Jerome Park Campus of the Hungerford School; Justin Gershonowitz; Ahmed Elchoum (back); and Diante Perry (front).



## Capital Capabilities

The Schenectady JCC exploded in creative expression showcasing the artistic talents of people with disabilities at the second annual Capital Capabilities held in October. Albany-area artists offered original artwork, music, short films, culinary and horticultural skills at the daylong abilities celebration.

Capital Capabilities is a collaborative effort involving Living Resources, Schenectady Arc, OPWDD, YWCA of Northeastern New York, Center for Disability Services, Schenectady JCC, Congregation Gates of Heaven, Congregation Beth Isreal, and Congregation Agudat Achim.

Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara served as honorary chair. Santabarbara, whose son has



Janet Brust, proudly displays her square featuring her favorite, Elvis Presley.



autism, acknowledged the importance of focusing on the abilities of individuals with disabilities and said "I will never stop fighting for individuals with disabilities and their families."

Brain Waves, a local 10-member group rocked the house by playing 50s, 60s and 70s tunes using a variety of instruments and a specialized notation system instead of standard musical notation. The event included an art exhibit, ceramics demonstration, challah bread baking, flower arranging, and discussions about therapy dogs and employment opportunities for people with disabilities through Puzzles Café.



Therapy dogs

It is the goal of organizing agencies and groups to include a collaborative art project that lives beyond the event. This year, groups and organizations were invited to design a quilt square that was incorporated into a community quilt. Janet Brust, who is supported by the Center for Disability Services, proudly displayed her square featuring a creative self-portrait taken with her favorite, Elvis Presley. ■



Members of the band Brain Waves



Assemblyman Santabarbara's Culinary demonstration

# Cheer

There are countless examples of things big and small that we can do to spread holiday cheer such as planning a caroling evening, making a plate of cookies for someone or participating in a holiday gift or food drive. Here are just a few ways members of the OPWDD family share the joy of the season.



*Keith Snyder*

Keith Snyder, of Rome, has been volunteering to ring the bell for the Salvation Army for more than 10 years. He starts his holiday tradition early by joining with peers at the O'Shea Day Habilitation on November 17 and 'mans the kettles' every Monday afternoon.

Last spring, a staff member who has a knack for craft took Elaine Kuc and Christine Keller, of West Seneca to the craft store where they purchased hat looms and yarn and the pair began making baby hats. Elaine and Christine donated their hats to Harvest House Baby Ministry. They have recently purchased scarf looms to make scarves. Elaine and Christine often talk to each other about how many babies are kept warm by wearing the hats they donated.

Their lives have changed in so many ways – from the empowerment of learning a new skill, to the awesome feeling of giving!!!

Individuals at Epilepsy Pralid Inc. day habilitation in Rochester recently found their volunteer niche making pillowcases for ConKerr Cancer. The pillowcases are given to children who are in the hospital undergoing treatment for cancer. The group meets once a week to work on the project, and quickly learned the nine steps of the pillowcase, which is called the 'hotdog' approach. Yahaira Valez (pictured) especially enjoys this project and enjoys giving the items to others.



*Yahaira Valez*

Heaven Scent, located in the small village of Gowanda, is a storefront subsidiary of the OPWDD State Operations Office 1 in Western New York which employs workers supported by the agency. One particular individual has found a

unique knack for creating beautiful wreaths.

Jill Hyman's "signature" wreaths are made of fabric. Several customers have requested personalized wreaths which Jill loves to make.



*Jill Hyman's "signature" wreaths*

The Rochester School of the Holy Childhood found the perfect way to spread holiday cheer. Their festive Creative Crates, custom-made wood crates that carry Holy Childhood pies, are popular not only in the Rochester area, but beyond. Delicious pies are made in their Special Touch Bakery; the Woodworking Shop makes the re-usable wooden crate; beautiful bows are made in the Partners with Industry fulfillment group, and the Transition and Skills group puts all of it together. VisitRochester purchased about 85 of these creations to send as holiday thank you gifts to their clients throughout the northeast.

Also at Holy Childhood, Jake and Sean make ceramic Christmas trees in preparation for the agency's annual holiday Arts and Crafts sale. Hundreds of community members attend and shop for creative craft items including the

trees, angels, snowmen, and other ornaments.

Jessica Campbell started her own business about three years ago called Stitches for Respect, a company that sells crocheted bracelets and key rings. Her primary means of sales is by word of mouth. To date, Jessica has almost raised \$500 in funds to give back to advocates and others in need in her community. One of Jessica's current projects is to purchase a court chair for someone who loves basketball.



*Jessica Campbell of Stitches for Respect*

Todd was working on holiday crafts with others recently at a day habilitation in Fredonia. When he was asked if he would like to make a holiday wreath, he was excited and asked if he could make one for his sister's family. Todd, with assistance from HS 1 Shannon Cramer, learned to shape a wire coat hanger into a wreath and adorn it with tied burlap and ribbons, which Todd mastered quickly. The wreath will be finished with a string of lights ready to present to his sister for the holidays.

When holiday time rolls around, Harriet Brown of Montezuma knows the true meaning of the season. She gives the gift of her time and talent. Harriet's talent is making Christmas cards using a technique she designed herself

using leaves, paper, spray paint and pizza boxes. Harriet delivers these to all of her co-workers, neighbors and friends each year. Harriet's reward is the joy that she brings to others.

Gestures of good will and random acts of kindness, no matter how big or how small, can change lives. Feel free to share with us how YOU will spread holiday cheer this season on OPWDD's Facebook page. ■



*Jake and Sean make ceramic Christmas trees*



*Festive Creative Crate by Jennifer*



*Todd's holiday wreath*



*Elain and Christine*

# Meet the 2014 OPWDD Employees of the Year:

OPWDD's more than 22,000 State employees play an important role in helping the individuals we serve 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.

In November we honored 28 people as Employees of the Year because they exemplify OPWDD's values of compassion, dignity, diversity, honesty, and excellence. Whether they are direct support professionals, managers, clinicians, or administration, these employees have embraced changes and met challenges with enthusiasm.



**Elizabeth Armstrong,  
R.N. 2,**

Ms. Armstrong is described as an excellent RN, a

valuable member of her team, and serves as a role model for others. In addition to being a dedicated worker providing the highest quality of care, she truly inspires others.



**Anne Bass, DDPS 1,  
DDRO 3 – Hudson  
Valley**

Anne brings a consistently creative

yet well-grounded approach to guiding and developing assistive technology and environmental modifications to waiver participants' homes in order to help remove the barriers a traditional home can impose on someone who is not traditionally abled.



**Barbara Bowman,  
Secretary 1, DDRO 1  
– Finger Lakes**

Barb gives 100% of herself every day to

everyone she connects with – individuals, families, staff and others. She is described as the “go to person.” Whether it's projects, arrangements, information on how to do something or who to contact, people go to Barb.



**Francina Branch-  
Elyse, TTL, DDRO 4  
– Bernard Fineson**

A true leader, Francina daily assists her staff

with problem solving and providing concrete solutions. She encourages her staff to uphold OPWDD standards and exemplifies our motto "Putting People First" Francine motivates her staff to stay abreast of all available services to best serve our individuals and families.



**Stacy Broker,  
LMSW2, DDRO 3 –  
Capital**

Stacy is always willing to provide training

and guidance to any team member, and has become invaluable in supporting staff who are transitioning from the campus to the regional office as part of the closure



**Sheila Carollo,  
RRPDS 2, Central  
Office – Revenue  
Support Field  
Operations**

Sheila is recognized as the OPWDD expert on SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and is consulted by OTDA and USDA

staff on issues that will impact those in our OPWDD population, often coordinating trainings to teach others how to support individuals in this area.



**Cindy Fladie, Sr.  
L.P.N. 2, DDSOO 1 –  
Finger Lakes**

Cindy knows each person beyond any

diagnoses or limitation. She is attentive when someone needs a helping hand, yet she inspires each individual to find their own strength despite any physical condition. Cindy is not just a nurse or supervisor; she is a leader who understands firsthand the challenges faced by the nursing and direct care staff.



**Sharon Fulfrost,  
Program Manager 2,  
DDSOO 6 – Long  
Island**

Sharon advocates for all individuals to ensure that they receive quality care. Sharon's background as a recreational therapist enables her to contribute creative and innovative ideas for active treatment and the identification of meaningful experiences in the community for individuals.



**Linda Goff, LMSW 2,  
DDRO 3 – Taconic**

Linda diligently works with her units to provide training, develop internal processes and streamline service delivery. Linda is described by her staff as a very patient, supportive and energetic supervisor who puts herself last and provides immediate assistance when needed.



**Anne Haberer,**  
**DDPS 1, DDRO 1 –**  
**Western NY**

Anne is the sole person responsible for managing a multitude of budget and fiscal tasks for the Regional Office. She has assisted over 400 people to receive funding supports which enable them to live independently in a home of their choice. When Anne gets a question that she can't answer she doesn't tell you to find someone else; she helps you find the answer or person to help.



**Muriel Hardy-Lee,**  
**Willowbrook**  
**Liaison, DDRO 4 –**  
**Bronx**

Muriel advocates for the best interest of each person she supports, often working evenings and weekends to assist families and individuals. She independently carries out additional research in order to ensure individuals utilize all benefits to which they are entitled.



**Nancy Imbarrato,**  
**DA 2, DDSOO 3 –**  
**Capital**

Nancy's supervisor says she strongly believes in the mission of the agency and exemplifies what a SUPPORT staff should be. The individuals that she works with have a great deal of respect for her as she treats them fairly and with a great deal of respect.



**Matthew Jones,**  
**Maintenance**  
**Assistant, DDSOO 4**  
**– Hudson Valley**

Matt believes in 'service before self' and to him, everyone else comes first. Matt is a

"go-to" employee and that "out of the box," self-directed thinker that we all dream of having on our team.



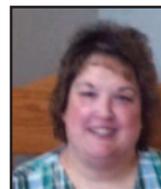
**Sharlon Joseph,**  
**SWA 3, DDRO 4 –**  
**Manhattan**

A talented speaker, Sharlon can engage the families during Front Door information sessions in a way that promotes the start of a successful working relationship. She is known for her quick turn-around when responding to families, her time management and organizational skills, her enthusiasm, her professionalism and her cheerful, cooperative nature.



**David Kennedy,**  
**Groundswoker,**  
**DDSOO 5 – Staten**  
**Island**

David's primary duties are within the grounds department where he has been a one-man show in keeping the facility's grounds in pristine condition. Although that's an important job throughout the year, David's supervisors and coworkers especially appreciate David's thorough and prompt attention to keeping the facility open and reachable during some of winter's most severe snow storms. David's dedication to his job and his spirit of cooperation are what inspired his nomination.



**Dina Lamica, DSA,**  
**DDSOO 3 –**  
**Sunmount**

Dina treats all individuals with respect and kindness. She is well versed in each person's histories, needs and capabilities, and makes everyone feel special by cooking

them their favorite meal or playing their favorite game when they visit.



**Portia McKinney,**  
**DA 1, DDSOO 4 –**  
**Taconic**

Portia is a strong advocate for the women she supports and strives to be attentive to each one's needs. She is a highly effective manager, and an inspirational and supportive leader to her staff.



**Philip Maggiore,**  
**Transportation**  
**Supervisor, Institute**  
**for Basic Research**

Phil is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the transportation department's daily operations. He is appreciated for his pleasant demeanor and ready smile as well as his cooperative spirit and helpfulness to his colleagues. He is an outstanding employee who is always willing and eager to assist anyone he comes in contact with.

**Eileen Maturi, Secretary 1, DDRO**  
**4 – Staten Island (no photo)**

Eileen's approach to families and agencies is honest and genuine. She is respectful, compassionate and sensitive to their needs.



**Reza Mohamed,**  
**MHSDS3, DDSOO 6**  
**– Bernard Fineson**

Reza's supervisor describes him as talented, enthusiastic and always willing to help others. He creatively identifies alternative methods of delivering training to facilitate learning.



**Vaishali Mohile,**  
Nutrition Services  
Administrator 2,  
DDSOO 6 – Bernard  
Fineson

Vaishali has been supportive in promoting and encouraging her dietary staff to interact with individuals in constructive ways to make their dining experiences more pleasant and as comfortable as possible. She encourages individuals to advocate for their needs/likes/dislikes, and always involves individuals by discussing their preferences when making meal plans and menus.



**Sharon Mumford,**  
DA 3, DDSOO 2 –  
Central New York

As a supervisor, Sharon builds excellent team spirit and direction. She excels at training, motivating and guiding staff. Sharon leads by example with a calm demeanor and professionalism.



**Dana Oakes, DSA,**  
DDSOO 1 – Western

According to his peers, Dana has shown an attitude of compassion and caring to the individuals we serve, enabling them to experience life more fully by helping them achieve some of their dreams and wishes.



**Kimberly Perry, DA**  
3, DDSOO 5 – Metro

Kimberly has an excellent work ethic that sets a high

standard for others, but her supervisor said it is her personal attention to the people she supports that sets her apart.



**Daniel Purtz,**  
Secretary 1, DDROO  
5 – Long Island

Dan is front and center in the day-to-

day issues that come up for families and individuals supported in the Individualized Support Services Unit. Dan is cognizant of families' desire to have plans move forward, and he knows just how to accomplish that task.



**Scott Sayward,**  
Social Worker 2,  
DDRO 2 –  
Sunmount

In the face of constant change and new challenges, Scott has maintained his enthusiasm, optimism and commitment to success that is so vital to maintaining a positive and productive work environment. He is respected by his staff and recognized as a true leader.



**Dawn Slater, DA 2,**  
DDSOO 2 – Broome  
and DDRO 2  
Broome

Dawn actively listens to all concerns and works diligently to bring resolution to outstanding areas in need of attention or follow up. An excellent role model for her staff, Dawn always leads by example and ensures that her team works together to bring a high quality of life to the people they support.



**Brenda Stallings,**  
Social Worker 2,  
DDRO 4 – Brooklyn

When Brenda assumed the role of Front Door Information Team Leader, she quickly embraced the responsibilities. Her willingness to assume additional responsibilities has been inspirational to her staff who strive to emulate her.

[Visit the Employee of the Year Wall of Fame on OPWDD's website to read more.](#) ■



## 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](mailto:Communications.Office@opwdd.ny.gov). You can also follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NYSOPWDD>. ■