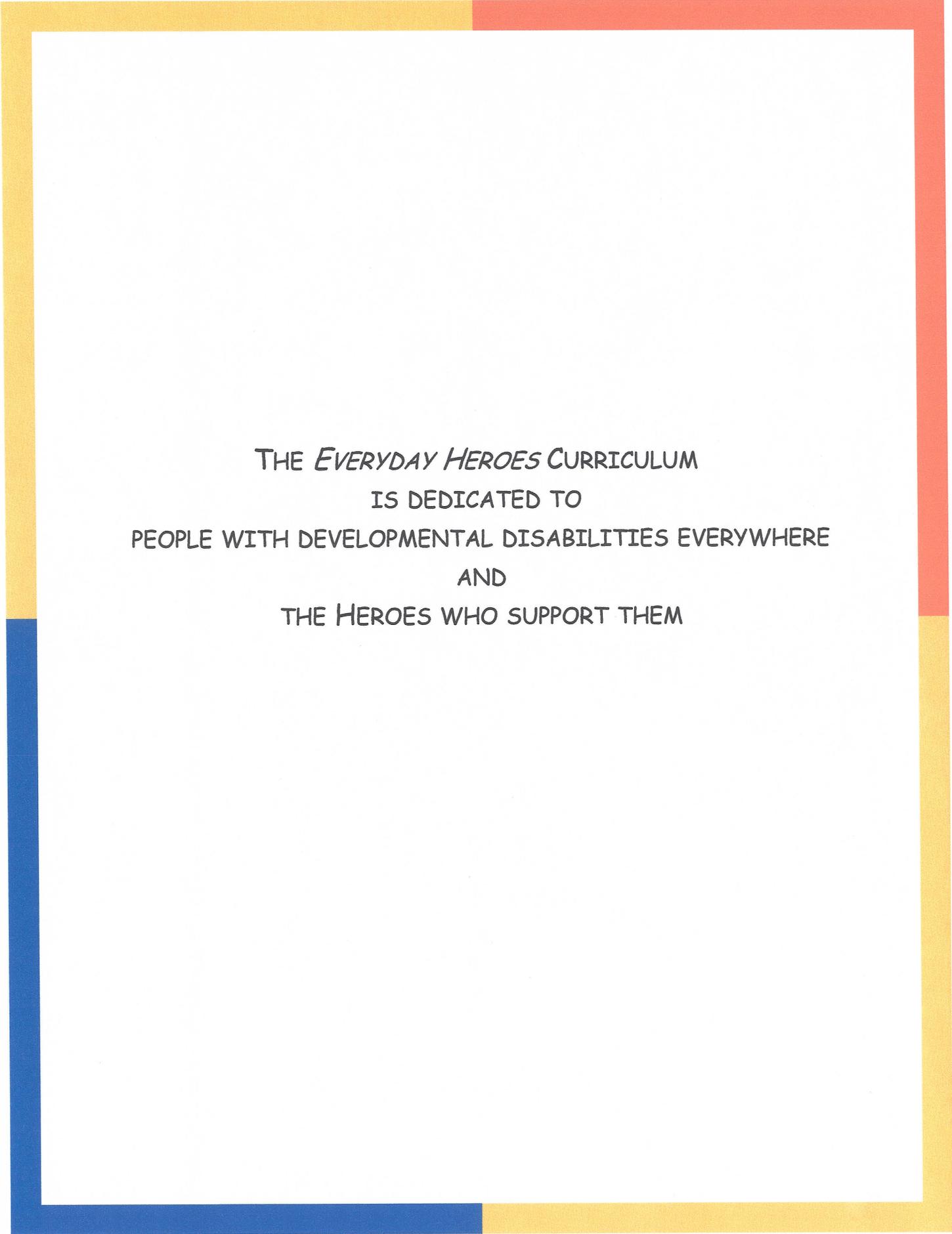


# EVERYDAY HEROES



BUILDING DIRECT SUPPORT LEADERSHIP  
FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION



THE *EVERYDAY HEROES* CURRICULUM  
IS DEDICATED TO  
PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES EVERYWHERE  
AND  
THE HEROES WHO SUPPORT THEM

# Everyday Heroes Building Direct Support Leadership for Community Inclusion

NYS  
OMRDD

## About the Everyday Heroes Initiative

The Everyday Heroes initiative recognizes the contributions of direct support professionals, supports them as leaders and teachers of other direct support workers, and deepens their commitments and contributions to inclusion through person centered practices.

The Office of Mental Retardation (OMRDD) convened its first Everyday Heroes Leadership Institute in New York City in 2001 to learn from direct support workers who supported inclusion for people with disabilities. The first Heroes were chosen by voluntary agencies and Developmental Disabilities Services Offices (DDSOs) in NYC based on their leadership when promoting community lives for people. Along with OMRDD staff and Dr. Beth Mount, Capacity Works, these staff identified twelve themes that reflect direct support

qualities and activities that promote inclusion. This information was incorporated within a workbook and companion teaching tools, including an educational story quilt and a yearly calendar. OMRDD has since held a series of Everyday Heroes Leadership Institutes around NYS, involving more than one thousand direct support leaders from DDSOs and voluntary agencies. In all instances, the Heroes serve as leaders and teachers at regional conferences that share best inclusion practices.

OMRDD was honored to receive the *2004 Direct Support Workforce Development Moving Mountains Best Practice Award* from the University of Minnesota and the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals. The Developmental Disabilities Plan-



*"S(he) who works with her hands, her head and her heart is an artist."  
St. Francis of Assisi*

ning Council (DDPC) is funding a network of six agencies to incorporate Everyday Heroes values within their organizations, implement best practices for inclusion by their direct support professionals, and then mentor other agencies regionally on adopting the Everyday Heroes inclusion model. DDPC and the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) have also supported the production of the instructional DVD.

## Helping hands make a difference and change the world

Direct support professionals hold the quality of people's lives in their hands. These are the hands that lift people up, the hands that touch, teach, and heal, and the hands that hold and keep people's lives together.

As shown in the Everyday Heroes DVD, direct support professionals make their mark on the world when they implement three ideals:

- They help people to have *meaningful relationships*.

- They support people to become *regulars* in places we all frequent.
- They **TAKE THE NEXT STEP** from **OLD** to **BETTER** to **BEST**, to support membership, *one person at a time*.

## Module 1: Learning the Basics

April 2006

### The heroes tell us...

- *"I want to support Lillian to be as independent as possible and so I step in only when she needs me."*
- *"When Joe misses services, people inquire about him. Now Joe has a whole new family of people who care!"*
- *"Ron gained confidence and independence, and the two became great friends."*

### Inside this module:

<i>Becoming a member in a church congregation</i>	2
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## Support people to become regulars in places we all frequent: Becoming a member in a church congregation

Mavis's story shows how she helped Joe become a real member of a church congregation. For as long as she had known Joe, he acted out his frustration toward other people, and no one really believed he could ever participate in the community.

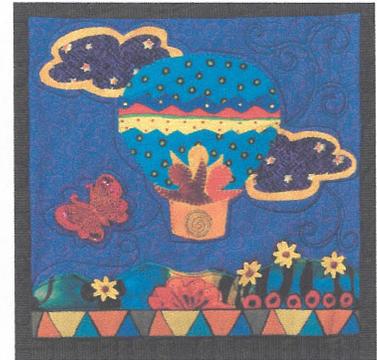
But Mavis believed in Joe!

*See the abilities in people, not just the problems!!*

Mavis invited Joe to join her church congregation. He decided to give it a try and she could not have hoped for any better connections for Joe with the parishioners. He has been invited to pray and sing at two services. He has

also accepted invitations to birthday parties and attended a culture night where he represented Italy. Joe has personally met and had conversations with the Pastor. The parishioners ensure he gets his usual seat, which is four rows from the front, and when he misses services, people inquire about him. Joe has really grown through his ongoing membership with the church.

Mavis was able to *share her life* by using her connection to her church congregation to facilitate membership for Joe. Joe is not only a *regular* at church services, he has a *regular* seat at church. He attends church functions and *people miss him when he is absent*.



*Mavis and Joe are regulars at her church. He has his own seat, knows the pastor and other parishioners, and participates in services and social events.*

## Leadership qualities of Everyday Heroes who “Make it Happen”

When direct support professionals were asked what makes them leaders, they told us the following:

Heroes are good communicators. They speak out and act as strong advocates for others.

They are not afraid to ask questions. They use the street as a “classroom.”

They make connections for people, and think “out of the box” to create work and volunteer sites for people.

They are good teachers and listeners.



They always look for new ideas. They help new staff learn the job. They are reliable, work hard and do whatever it takes to get the job done.

People come to them for help.

People count on them, especially in tough situations.

They work well with others and bring people together.

They are good team builders.

They see the abilities in people, not just the problems.

They treat everyone with respect.

There is nothing they wouldn't do to support people.

They love their job; they are the best!!

## Everyday Heroes help people “Get A Life”

Community inclusion is an essential outcome of person centered planning for people with disabilities, and community belonging has become a hallmark of OMRDD services. People should participate in community activities consistent with their interests, preferences and capabilities. These activities allow people to participate in and contribute to community life, to develop their unique capabilities and to be valued by others.

People with developmental disabilities need not be isolated and separated from community life. Self-advocates say, “We want what you have.” They want friends, family, and opportunities to work.

It is critical to have input from direct sup-



*Heroes support people in their life journeys*

port professionals to help plan community lives for people that include those very things. Through their hard work, personal contacts and commitment, people become friends, neighbors and real members within their communities.

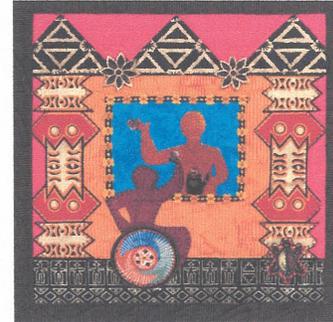
## Take the next step from Old to Better to Best: Experiencing college in a personal way

Paula's story shows how she helped Ron to **TAKE THE NEXT STEP** from **OLD** to **BETTER** to **BEST**. Music had always been a big part of Ron's life. Before his accident at the age of 17, Ron played guitar at his high school and in a local band. Ron's accident left him with the use of only one hand, and so he took to learning how to play the piano with his right hand.

Over the years Ron had lessons with music therapists at the center, and he practiced for several hours daily. That was **BETTER** than Ron trying to teach himself, but he was still isolated from his community. Paula decided to **TAKE THE NEXT STEP** to **BEST**.

She arranged for Ron to take piano lessons on the State University of New York at Binghamton college campus! The Assistant to the Chair of the Department helped find a student, Nancy, who was willing to give it a try. Nancy quickly learned how to communicate with Ron by watching staff who would accompany Ron. The experience was further enriched as Ron became used to the campus and would stop at the cafeteria to purchase snacks.

Ron and Nancy developed a wonderful relationship over two full semesters. Ron brought his musical skills to the next level, gained confidence and independence, and the two became great friends.



*Paula focused on Ron's interest in music, thought about where people come together to further their skills, and arranged for lessons at the local SUNY campus with a student. Ron and the student developed a reciprocal relationship of friendship and the chance to relate as fellow musicians.*

## Community Building: Taking the next step

Times have changed for people with even the most severe disabilities. We are moving from **OLD** activities that isolate groups of people, within large institutions, segregated group homes or site based day programs.

It is **BETTER** when people have presence in their communities, participating side by side with other community members, as customers, neighbors and friends.

But it is **BEST** when community presence is coupled with planning on an individual basis, so that people contribute as community members, one person at a time.

*TAKE THE NEXT STEP MEANS  
GOING FROM OLD  
TO BETTER  
TO BEST*

The challenge with community building is to **TAKE THE NEXT STEP** and move from **OLD** to **BETTER** to **BEST** activities that allow people to:

- strengthen personal relationships with community members and neighborhood life,
- become members of associations and community groups,
- become regulars in the community, and develop valued roles as workers and volunteers.

## Everyday Heroes help people have meaningful relationships

When people with developmental disabilities connect regularly with community members in places we all frequent, we increase their opportunities for recognition and friendship. Community inclusion is NOT taking people around to places in the community in large groups, or bringing people from the community to segregated programs. The focus should be on enhancing individual experiences so that people lead lives of contribution and are recognized and valued as community members.

*At the heart of community inclusion is the development of enduring relationships.  
Community inclusion is not just "one shot" trips or outings.*

Community inclusion is defined as experiences and/or activities that may occur both in and out of the home and day services, but allows the person the opportunity to:

- interact with people who are not paid and who do not have a developmental disability, and
- use resources that are available to all community members.

For more information on Everyday Heroes, contact the State of New York OMRDD at (518) 473-6026 or (518) 474-4904; or [WWW.OMR.STATE.NY.US](http://WWW.OMR.STATE.NY.US).



*Taking Action:*

- *What are your leadership qualities that promote community building for people with disabilities?*
- *What ways have you been successful on behalf of people in facilitating meaningful relationships and being a regular at places we all frequent?*
- *Think about some activities that you do that you might now consider **OLD**. How would you take the next step to get to **BETTER** or **BEST** practices?*
- *Think about a place or association where you “belong,” and would be missed if you were absent. How can you assist a person with disabilities to establish such a connection?*

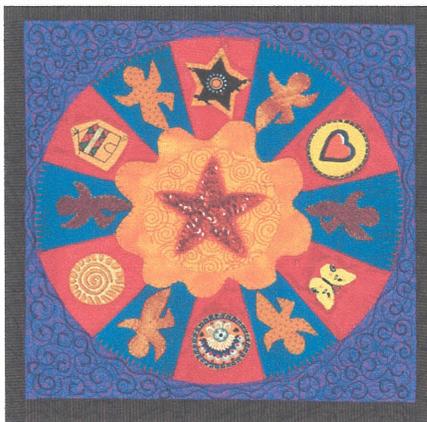
## Develop Individual Strategies: Getting started

Direct support professionals are leaders in promoting community relationships. They bring both *passion* and *compassion* to the job every day. With their perseverance and consistency, they walk side by side with people to ensure their genuine connections with community members. A true test of community connections is if a person is missed when they are absent.

Deidre’s story reflects the power of advocacy in developing relationships. She knew that Lillian had difficulty maintaining her “cool” in the community. But Deidre believed that Lillian had the right to be in the community and was a strong advocate for her.

When Lillian told Deidre she wanted to go to the library, Lillian called to get information. Together, Deidre and Lillian figured out how to get there by bus. Lillian secured a metro card at the bus terminal. Deidre supported Lillian to be as independent as possible, so she stepped in only when needed.

*To follow up on the lessons learned on community inclusion and advocacy, make a commitment to the development of a community inclusion strategy for an individual and consider their interests, capabilities and preferences.*



*This star represents the five accomplishments of inclusion: sharing places; knowing people; having respect; making choices; and making a contribution.*

*Think about the circle of relationships through which people are connected to their communities. In addition, consider how you can increase a person’s presence in community life; how you can expand friendships; promote choice; and provide ways for a person to contribute through volunteering or work.*

*A person’s strategy should include action steps for moving ideas into reality. Think about what works and does not work, and consider opportunities right in the neighborhood whenever possible. Decide who will take the lead for all action steps. Discuss time frames and set up times for meeting and follow up.*

*Remember to **TAKE THE NEXT STEP** and go from **OLD** activities to **BETTER** and **BEST** practices.*

# Everyday Heroes Building Direct Support Leadership for Community Inclusion

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## Everyday Heroes *themes* depicted in fabric artwork

When Everyday Heroes described what they do to build community, their best practices were organized into twelve *themes*, which are depicted by the story squares in the Everyday Heroes quilt. The hands along the border represent the unique mark made by each hero on behalf of others. The center heart sparks a flame of creativity, the hallmark of Everyday Heroes.

Listen to the stories of the heroes on the DVD. Think about their hands and their hearts. Look for the twelve *themes* that are woven together to support membership for people.



Quilt created by Beth Mount, Ph.D., Capacity Works.  
Artwork inspired from designs by our first heroes.

## Think about how the themes cluster into four quadrants

Direct support professionals deserve applause for their everyday heroic labors. For engaging people to DEEPEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS. [QUADRANT ONE]

They are exceptionally caring and constantly cheering. CREATING CONTRIBUTION THROUGH WORK AND VOLUNTEERING. [QUADRANT TWO]

*“Although every story is not recorded and every hero cannot be heard  
They are greatly appreciated for taking  
vision to new heights and soaring people’s dreams just like a bird.”*

*Rubin Williams, PSCH*

These staff raise people’s self esteem by using words like “Yes you can” and “I knew you could” while BUILDING CONNECTIONS WITHIN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS. [QUADRANT THREE]

Their dedication decreases people’s isolation, improves methods of communication. They BUILD MEMBERSHIP without hesitation. [QUADRANT FOUR]

## Module 2: Themes that Support Community Life

April 2006

### The heroes tell us...

- “Our community connections have helped Thelma and Barbara to raise their self esteem to a new height. That’s the magic!!”
- “Anna now even uses some words to communicate and she has the most expressive face. You can see she is so happy.”
- “By making choices, Beverly has assumed greater control of her life, and she is so much happier.”

### Inside this module:

Promote self-esteem from the inside and out	2
Quadrant One	2
Quadrant Two	2
Find common ground and mutual understanding	3
Quadrant Three	4
Quadrant Four	5
Individualize a person’s schedule and lifestyle choices	6

## Don't STIGMATIZE, Advertise: Promote self-esteem from the inside and out

When Roseanne began working with the ladies of Vails Gate, she believed in the importance of being aware of oneself, no matter the shape, size, height or width. She wanted them to learn that they could develop a personal style or look, starting with their nails, and that looking good was not just for special events. Thelma and Barbara enjoyed doing their nails at home, so Roseanne scheduled manicure appointments at a local nail salon as a way to build community.

The first few visits to the salon were a real test of faith for Roseanne and the ladies. In this local community, Roseanne realized that they needed courage to build their acceptance as customers. They kept the experience small to promote inclusion.

With each trip, they became more comfortable. As regular customers for more than one year, they go to the salon, select their polish and talk with Lee, the owner, the other employees and customers. They are on a first name basis. They look forward to their next appointment.

Roseanne reminds Barbara and Thelma that people often judge others by what they see. They talk about what looks good on them. They look at magazines to see what is new in fashion. They shop for accessories and buy nice outfits. They have great haircuts.

But inclusion is more than just fashion. It is about self-esteem and supporting people in socially valued roles within the community, as customers, neighbors and friends.



*Theme 5: Help people develop a style or look. Model ways to positively relate to community members. Attention to even small details can have a big impression on the acceptance and response from others.*

## Quadrant One: Deepen Relationships with Friends, Family and Neighbors

### Theme 1:

**Nurture RELATIONSHIPS with community members.**

Meet the neighbors.

Go to community events; volunteer.

Frequent the same stores; be a regular.

Look to your own life for leads and connections.

### Theme 2:

**LISTEN to people with your heart, see into their souls.**

Learn about people's interests.

Respond to what people say.

Support people to express what is unique about them. Be a good listener, and practice patience. When people do not use words, "listen" to their bodies, faces and behavior.

### Theme 3:

**Build ALLIANCES with families and advocates.**

Support family calls, updates, visits. Work in teams.

Build common understanding and respect between key people.



## Quadrant Two: Create Opportunities for Contribution through Work and Volunteering

### Theme 4:

**I BELIEVE, do you? Have high expectations.**

Support people to reach for a dream, and make a unique contribution in work and in their associations with others.

Expect the best in people. Take action to make dreams happen.

Focus on what people can do, not what they cannot do.

### Theme 5:

**Don't stigmatize, ADVERTISE!**

Pay attention to personal presentation and appearance.

Have a passion for fashion.

Do things with one person at a time, or in small groups.



### Theme 6:

**Provide CHOICE.**

Support people to have their own keys, cash, work, associations and lives.

Individualize and personalize people's schedules, identities, and other lifestyle choices.

Respect and learn from mistakes.

## Create UNDERSTANDING one person at a time: Find common ground and mutual understanding

When Laura met Anna more than five years ago, she was not able to communicate clearly, didn't hear well, and showed her frustrations by being stubborn. Now Anna has learned to communicate her needs in a variety of ways. Laura has also found that she could help foster Anna's communication by being more specific and patient with her.

A communication board was designed for Anna. However, it was cumbersome to take into the community and it was difficult for her to use. A pocket size version was then designed that Anna could take with her everywhere she went. This book contained pictures of every day items she might need and places that Anna might like to go.

Anna's book became a portable, reliable way for her to "talk" with others.

The communication book really helped Anna in her work with Meals on Wheels in her community. She made a new friend, Laila. When she delivers meals to Laila, Anna uses sign language and her book to talk about her lunch, the day, her cat, almost anything.

Now that they can communicate, Anna and Laila have developed a wonderful relationship. Anna teaches Laila new signs during their visits and they enjoy each other's company. Anna now even uses some words to communicate and she has the most expressive face. You can tell she is so happy!



*Theme 10: Appreciate difference. Model for others how to relate. Share personal experiences when overcoming obstacles.*

*Don't be discouraged when an experience does not work as planned.*

## Quadrant Three: Build Connections with Your Neighborhood

### Theme 7:

#### **Know the NEIGHBORHOOD.**

Create community by going to the same places, at the same time, to do things of value. See what you can offer to others.

Use the street as your classroom.

Join local gyms and neighborhood associations.

### Theme 8:

#### **RESPECT each other.**

Teach respect. Treat people like family. See people as adults.

Give a person love and respect, and get it back. Have empathy and patience. Listen to your tone of voice.

Involve people in conversation. Talk to people directly instead of talking about them or to others.

Put yourself in the person's shoes.

Treat people like people and not like consumers.



### Theme 9:

#### **CELEBRATE life and CREATE COMMUNITY! Have fun.**

Create occasions to bring people together. Find and share inspiration. Plan and have celebrations with people. Include them in shopping, preparing, decorating. Get involved in organizations that do things for others.

## Quadrant Four: Build Memberships through Associations

### Theme 10:

#### **Create UNDERSTANDING one person at a time.**

Model for others how to relate.

Overcome discrimination. Challenge rejection.

Take the next step. Be persistent.

Appreciate differences. Honor people's culture, style, and differences.

Don't be discouraged when an experience does not work out as planned.

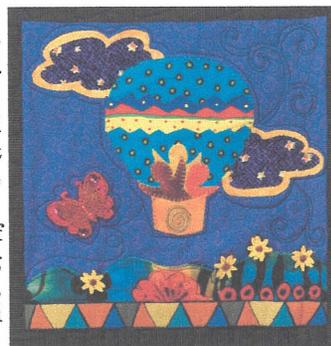
Try another way!

### Theme 11:

#### **Support many ways for people to COMMUNICATE.**

Listen to people's eyes and body language. Support people to learn and use words for their feelings.

Use many methods of communication, including use of a voice synthesizer, signs, cards, wallets, and boards.



### Theme 12:

#### **SHARE YOUR LIFE and your journey.**

Be a friend. Take trips together, go places, share friends and family life.

Know staff interests, match people and nurture common interests.

Use staff connections to access new opportunities.

For more information on Everyday Heroes, contact the State of New York OMRDD at (518) 473-6026 or (518) 474-4904; or [WWW.OMR.STATE.NY.US](http://WWW.OMR.STATE.NY.US).



*Taking Action:*

- *How do you already support people to belong and contribute in their communities?*
- *With a particular person in mind, choose a theme and come up with a strategy that builds community connections. Think of as many opportunities as possible and pay particular attention to places, associations and settings that are within walking distance or a short commute.*
- *Inclusion is not always easy. If you had a bad experience in the past, how did you build confidence to try again?*

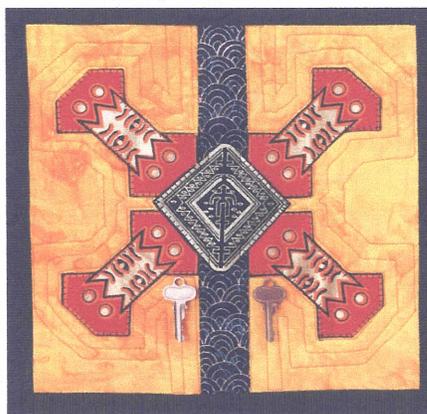
## Provide CHOICE: Individualize a person’s schedule and lifestyle choices

Sandra and Ann recognized that the structure of a program environment geared to 35 people created frustration for Beverly, and she showed her frustration with her behavior. They used Day Habilitation without Walls to allow Beverly to make choices about her life and how she would spend her days.

Beverly told Ann she wanted to shop and walk, two of her favorite things. She also loved getting her hair done. They found a hair salon at the mall while walking and Beverly has become a regular. They now go to the waterfront at Beverly’s request, to walk and watch the sights. They volunteer at the soup kitchen, where she has become special friends with Joe, Tuesday’s cook.

Beverly is full of smiles and very social now that she is able to see and do things she couldn’t do before. By making choices, Beverly has assumed

greater control of her life. She is so much happier. She has friends and gives back to her community through her volunteer experiences. Beverly has become a confident, helpful member of her community.



*Theme 6: Support people to have their own keys, cash, work, associations, and lives. Help people get involved in hobbies, pastimes and clubs that express interests.*

*As a next step on behalf of a particular individual, reflect on their pattern of choice making and look for opportunities to change the pattern. Work closely with the people that know the person best. Think about the choices made by the person, and the choices made for them by others.*

*Think about how to promote choice in self-expression, ownership and spending.*

*Finally, as the person’s choices result in new connections with people and places, what are the opportunities for increasing autonomy in interactions and independence.*

*What are the first steps? Don’t forget to plan for the supports needed to implement the person’s choices and then to sustain their choices over time.*

# Everyday Heroes Building Direct Support Leadership for Community Inclusion

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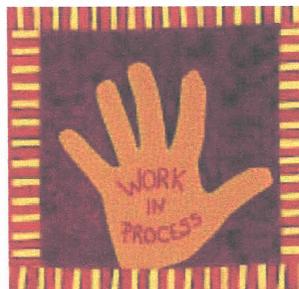
## Building community is a “Work In Process”

Everyday Heroes Leadership Institutes provide opportunities for direct support professionals to come together to learn and share strategies on community inclusion. Chosen for their leadership and merit in delivering quality services, the Heroes participate in sessions with a partner, to confirm the values from Everyday Heroes and articulate these values in meaningful and creative ways for someone they support.

Everyday Heroes promote the use of activities, music, photography, poetry, and art to share direct support wisdom and teach others about inclusion.

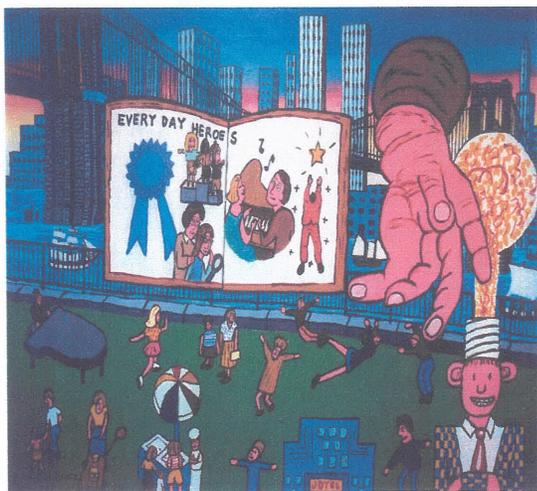
With this *Work in Process*, they develop confidence to tell their stories and become mentors for other staff.

Regional conferences are held to honor the heroes who share the lessons they learned. People with developmental disabilities are invited, as honored guests, along with other direct support staff who enjoy the chance to learn and network together. The event is further enriched by the participation of community members and program directors, supervisors, and training directors, who are challenged to implement similar initiatives.



With Everyday Heroes, everyone wins! People collectively feel good about what they do and agencies provide services that people want. People with developmental disabilities enjoy increased community lives as direct support professionals apply the Everyday Heroes values on their behalf.

## Art helps express the spirit of Everyday Heroes



*Painting created by William Britt, artist, captures the brightness of divine intervention and human concern*

This artwork was sponsored by Hudson Valley DDSO. Mr. Britt was inspired by the many Heroes who reached out to him throughout his life. The hand represents the kindness of helpers who touched his life along the way and is a symbol of human concern. The hand also represents every Hero who encourages and supports people with disabilities. The light bulb represents the good ideas that Heroes bring into the lives of others and the insight gained from sharing the journey. The people engaged in everyday life symbolize community membership. The soaring figure serves as a reminder that people rise above their limitations and fly on the supportive wings of others who care.

## Module 3: Work in Process

April 2006

### The heroes tell us...

- *“There has never been a flower quite like Tyeast.”*
- *“It is great to see him knowing people, having respect and making choices about his life.”*
- *“No matter what obstacles a person has, physical, emotional, or social, there are ways they can achieve their dreams.”*

### Inside this module:

- Look past the record to learn about people* 2
- Create capacity descriptions with objects* 2
- Assure choice through the “eyes” of the heart* 2
- Work together to enhance relationships with family and neighbors* 3
- Find opportunities for connections through relationship maps* 4
- Build community through neighborhood maps* 5
- Thinking about what a person cannot do limits ideas* 6

## Know the NEIGHBORHOOD: Look past the record to learn about people

Louisa met Tyeast when she moved into her own apartment. She wanted to help Tyeast build a neighborhood life, but Tyeast didn't speak. Louisa needed to learn about Tyeast's interests and find ways for her to make connections.

Tyeast and Louisa looked for pictures of things she liked most and made a collage to show her interests. They also went to the store to purchase a basket to hold items that represented Tyeast's interests and hopes for the future. Using pictures and objects really helped her communicate. She was able to express her interests by pointing and clapping her hands. However, once Louisa and Tyeast began communicating with objects, Tyeast began to use words. Louisa learned so much more from the basket and collage than

from her record. These items gave Tyeast a voice and provided Louisa with insight as to who Tyeast really was. She likes to get her hair and nails done, and she has become a regular at the local beauty shop. She also enjoyed exploring her neighborhood with Louisa. They both became regulars around town and Louisa became so connected to the neighborhood that she decided to move there too!! Louisa and Tyeast added a flower to her basket to represent her growth from a seed into a flower.

Louisa was a good listener and used objects to learn about what mattered to Tyeast. Together they went out to see what was available and discovered the richness of the neighborhood.



*Theme 7: Know key people in the neighborhood and ask their advice. Join local gyms and recreational facilities. See what is in the neighborhood. Consider special community projects.*

## Create capacity descriptions with objects

Creation of art, in the form of collages, baskets, poems and photograph albums can help a person with developmental disabilities effectively express his or her dreams, preferences, favorite places and identify important people; and accomplishments they and others are proud of. Through artistic expression, people develop a common understanding of what matters most to a person. These projects require at least two sessions with assignments to complete between sessions.

The first session can be used to discuss the unique gifts, interests and preferences of a person; who the most important people are in their lives; their favorite places and where they go regularly; what they like to do; their dreams and hopes for the future; and what makes them proud. In the next session, people come back together to create art that represents the person's life as it is and their dreams for the future.



*Honor people's culture, style and differences. Keep it personal.*

## LISTEN to people with your heart, see into their souls: Assure choice through the "eyes" of the heart

When people do not use words, you can "listen" to their body language and their eyes. You can tell happiness or sadness by reading facial expressions. Watch people's faces. Follow their gaze. See their smiles. Look for other nonverbal cues such as open arms and widened eyes. People may also express their preferences with their behavior. See if there are common themes related to happy or sad behavior to determine preferred items when planning.

If people cannot tell you with words, watch to see what they most enjoy. See what they look forward to doing. Based on the things they enjoy, identify the places in which they can become regulars and valued community members.



*Have an imaginative vision for people's lives.*

It is **BEST** to get input from people who know the person well, such as a family member or special direct support professional, when planning community experiences for people.

## Build ALLIANCES with families and advocates: Work together to enhance relationships

When Chauntee first met Jose, he was a teenager. Even then, he wanted friends, to spend time with his mother and other family members, and to be as independent as possible. Chauntee wanted to support Jose's interests.

Over time, Jose became friends with neighbors, local storekeepers, and Eric from the pharmacy. He learned to make purchases on his own, bag items, and get the right change. He was proud to pick up his own medications.

Jose connected with Chauntee's sons through their mutual love of basketball. They did not see Jose as a person with a disability, but rather as a friend, even a fourth brother. They still play basketball often even though Jose has moved to another home.

Chauntee and Jose explored their lives by making relationship maps for each of them. They drew pictures and took photos of all the people in their lives. They talked about their feelings about the maps. Jose knew from his relationship map that he was closer to staff than his own mother. Chauntee saw that she was closer to her in-laws and co-workers than to her own family. They both decided to make changes to improve their relationships. Chauntee renewed her relationship with her mother by spending more time with her. This was very significant for Chauntee because her mother died soon after.

This map exercise helped bond Chauntee and Jose together even though he has since moved to another home in a new neighborhood.



*Theme 3: Build common understanding and respect between key people. Enter each relationship with an open mind. If you have a bad experience, build confidence and try again. Be honest with families. Contact families with good news, not just to report an incident.*

## Find opportunities for connection through relationship maps

A relationship map shows the important people in an individual's life who can contribute to the development of a more inclusive lifestyle. By understanding existing relationships, it is possible to find or create opportunities to develop new relationships or ways to strengthen those that already exist.

Prepare a "map" by dividing a page of paper into quarters and labeling the quarters as follows: FAMILY; FRIENDS; SERVICE PROVIDERS; COMMUNITY



MEMBERS. A picture may be placed in the center to personalize the map. Put the people they know on the "map" with a symbol or photo of the person and their

name. Show the nature of the relationship, how long they have known each other, and how much time they spend together. Put the people who are closest to the person toward the center of the map. Indicate intensity and strength of the relationships with heavier lines.

The completed map allows the person and their support network to see what relationships are readily available to the person and where additional relationships need to be strengthened or built.

## Build neighborhood connections through neighborhood maps

Neighborhood maps help people focus on the many opportunities available to build community lives for people. Once again, prepare a "map" by dividing a page of paper into quarters. Think in a person centered way when completing the map for the individual you work with.

- **Friendships and family.** Think about ways to nurture relationships with friends and involved family members.

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*"Look to your own life to develop strategies to help enrich people's lives. Spend time reflecting on how a neighborhood map would look for you."*

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- **Associational life.** Think about service clubs; collectors; men/women groups; service organizations; civic events; ethnic associations; sports, health, fitness groups; support groups; religious communities.

- **Neighborhood life.** Think about being a regular in stores and restaurants, and the many small ways people are seen and known in the daily routine of community life.

- **Day services, volunteer, work experiences.** Think about sets of activities or citizenship roles that "mainstream" people together, and support contribution.

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*Take Action:*

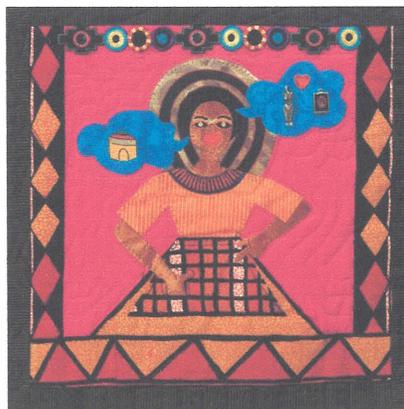
- *Think about your own connections with community places and organizations by reviewing the contents of your wallet or purse. Look for personal letters, cards or postcards. Do you have items from a friend, a parent or family member, such as a special piece of jewelry? Are there items from your job, or perhaps a bus or train pass? Do you carry a membership card, a frequent use card, or a symbol of your religious, cultural or ethnic heritage? Are there keys to your home, car or office? Is there a driver’s license, or an item related to a hobby or interest?*
- *Consider what evidence of connection you would find for a person with disabilities.*
- *Is there any way you can help a particular person become better connected?*

## Support many ways for people to COMMUNICATE: Thinking about what the person cannot do limits ideas

When Vanessa and Phyllis first met Michelle, she seemed sad a lot. Her physical challenges made it hard for her to go out for activities, and she had difficulty communicating with words. They knew Michelle’s biggest dream was to become involved with children, so they made arrangements with a local preschool program for Michelle to read stories to the children using a voice synthesizer. The children were afraid at first, but when she played a song and asked the children questions, they became curious and came closer to her wheelchair and to see how she talks. Over time, they became very attached to Michelle.

Volunteering has brought excitement and happiness to Michelle. She loves to “talk” with the children at the day care program. She also volunteered with children at the Batavia School for the Blind. Michelle can now be seen with a big smile saying, “I am happy here!”

This story illustrates how community life is more likely when the person with disabilities is appreciated for their gifts and capabilities.



*Theme 11: See past the obvious differences in life. Find common ground and mutual understanding that binds people together in their life journeys.*

*To follow up on the lessons learned, when thinking about people, make a commitment to positive thinking. Call key people together for an individual, to help discuss the unique qualities that will be keys to community building. Think about the person from a capacity view. Rather than diagnoses, think about traits that are endearing. Think about skills, or potential skills, and interests rather than weaknesses. Think about what works best rather than problems to overcome. Think about who people like best, be it a favored staff, friend or family member, and try to develop activities with them. Think about personal habits that shape participation, such as activity level or health. Think about social identities related to ethnicity, religion, interests.*

*This discussion can take place during a team meeting or any time when the principal people are together.*

# Everyday Heroes

## Building Direct Support Leadership for Community Inclusion

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### Heroes tell their stories: Sharing the wisdom

The Everyday Heroes initiative combines recognition, awards and learning, and culminates in a regional conference given by and for direct support professionals.

When the Heroes and their partners are chosen by their DDSOs and agencies as teams, they are recognized for their commitment to people with developmental disabilities. During the institutes, the Heroes learn about inclusion and share stories of their work building inclusion. The heart of their work is then lifted up for all to appreciate. The Heroes and partners become teachers when they present their stories to a large audience of direct support professionals at

the regional conference. Their stories tell of the personal and emotional growth, and lifestyle changes undertaken by the Heroes and person with developmental disabilities when making community connections.

The Heroes highlight a specific theme with their story, and provide details that harness the imagination of agency directors and other direct support professionals. The stories express how and why life changed. They tell us how they moved from **OLD** ways, to **BETTER** and ultimately **BEST** practices in community inclusion; how they dealt with many opposing forces; made difficult decisions; and took action despite obstacles.



Their stories tell us over and over that people with disabilities can become so connected within their communities that they are missed when they are unable to participate in their regular activities.

### Heroes share their hearts and souls: Getting to know each other

Direct support staff have unbelievable talents and souls that are often undiscovered and unsung. The discovery of these gifts can be uplifting and inspiring. Share these gifts by getting to know each other. Ask the questions:

- What is your source of inspiration?

- What do you say for inspiration?
- In what ways do you listen to and support people to live out their dreams?
- How do you support people to be accepted by others?
- What do people with disabilities learn from you?
- How do you support people to belong and contribute to others?
- What are your talents and interests?
- How do you show your commitment to the hearts and souls of people with disabilities and their families/advocates?

### Module 4: Telling the Story

April 2006

#### The heroes tell us...

- *"It is important for us to treat people how we want to be treated, and not as if they are different just because of their disability."*
- *"It is amazing to know that a person given six months to live is alive and living his dreams years later."*
- *"Barbara is a courageous woman to try so many new activities when she can't see."*

#### Inside this module:

*Bowling for gold* 2

*Use pictures to tell the story of citizenship for people* 2

*Storyboards help tell the tale* 2

*Plan new vacations for people* 3

*Consider descriptive words that elevate a person* 3

*Tell great stories about next steps* 3

*Be consistent and allow trust to develop over time* 4

## RESPECT Each Other: Bowling for gold

When Caroline first met Tyrone, he was very isolated. He spoke just a few words that were sometimes hard to understand. Although quiet, he loved to help people and liked sports, in particular, bowling. Caroline wanted to help Tyrone connect within his neighborhood.

Together they went to places near his home, such as the mall, the arcade, the movies, the corner store, and the bowling alley. But Tyrone clearly showed his interest and talents when bowling, so Caroline chose the bowling alley as a focal point to build relationships. They learned to take the bus to the bowling alley and went bowling at the same

time several days each week. Over time, Tyrone learned where to catch the bus and get off. He became more independent and confident. Caroline helps him do things on his own, and stays in the background so that he can take on more responsibility. He makes his own game purchases and gets bowling shoes for them both. He also orders and pays for his own snacks. They hope to join a local league sometime soon.

Caroline was steadfast in her support for Tyrone. Always empathetic and patient, they enjoy a reciprocal relationship born from mutual respect and the chance to relate as equals.



*Theme 8: Teach respect. Treat people like family. Give a person love and respect and get it back. Have empathy and patience. See people as adults. Put yourself in the person's shoes.*

## Use pictures to tell the story of citizenship for people

Help people look terrific when they go out, and capture them in photos. Help people build a wardrobe that is trendy, consistent with their age and culture, and in keeping with people they will meet in the community. Attention to small details can make a big difference in your pictures.

Feature images of people out and about in their communities. Show interaction of people with community members. Capture friendships and “special relation-

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*Use photos to capture memories and build new ones. When a person is moving, take photos of old neighborhoods and relationships. Build a collage of the new home.*

---

ships” on film. Take photos of people involved in community services, not just recreation activities. Display pictures in an album or in frames. Place in a collage.

Remember composition. When taking pictures of people in wheelchairs, include them in the body of the picture. Avoid pictures of people lined up in a row. Avoid pictures of large groups of people with disabilities.

Share pictures with family and advocates as part of regular communication. Put pictures of people on mugs, T-shirts, key rings, etc., and give as gifts. Use photos as part of personalized communication systems.

## Old, Better, Best of Storytelling: Storyboards help tell the tale

Creative planning is often supported through the development of storyboards. The storyboard provides a focus and acts as a prop for oral presentations. A story can be organized into these elements:

- An introduction that tells the origin of the story. Use person centered language. Highlight the person's talents and possibilities.
- A focus statement that relates to a theme or what staff wanted to accomplish for a person.

- A description about actions taken to promote change. Include the outcome and provide practical advice. Tell about the person as a teacher as well as learner, a giver as well as receiver.
- Conclude with lessons learned or the wisdom of the story.



*Use bright colors, glitter, photos and any media that expresses your ideas!*

Remember to rehearse. Be brief and make it personal. Don't over tell the story. Point out the successes and the “not so successful” times. Inclusion is never perfect or easy. Use artwork, music, photos and other media to express the point of the story.

Show confidence and have fun! Laugh and the whole world laughs along!

## SHARE YOUR LIFE and your journey: Planning new vacations for people

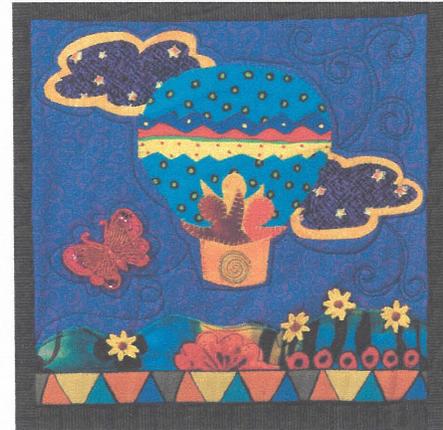
When Bridget first met Wilbur, she learned he had a terminal illness and had been given six months to live. He spent a lot of time in bed and could not walk because he was so ill. But Wilbur never lost his love of life, music and Elvis. He shared his dream to visit Graceland and to record Elvis songs.

Bridget took steps to help Wilbur achieve his dreams. She located a music studio and arranged for him to record a CD. People in Wilbur's life loved the CD, including the nurses at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, where he receives ongoing medical care. Wilbur has developed close relationships with them. They talk about their families and friends. The nurses are so fond of Wilbur they bring him Elvis

memorabilia for his collection, and even purchased a karaoke machine for him to enjoy his music at home.

Wilbur and Bridget finally vacationed at Graceland. They stayed at the famous Heartbreak Hotel right near Graceland. They went to Sun Studio, where Wilbur recorded another song on CD. He even performed an Elvis act at a restaurant. Wilbur brought back souvenirs for all the nurses and his other friends.

Bridget and Wilbur can now reminisce about their memories of this great trip. They have pictures in an album and a video of his restaurant performance. What great memories to share with others!!



*Theme 12: Be a friend. Take trips together, go places, share friends and family life. Share your interests and associations. Use storytelling and pictures to relate experiences.*

## Consider descriptive words that elevate a person

Instead of "consumers," use "friends," "co-workers," "housemates," "roommates."  
Instead of "toileting the person," use "assisting the person in the bathroom."

Instead of "feeding," use "eating," "dining," "having dinner," "getting a snack."

Instead of "travel training," use "learning the commute."

Instead of "total care," use "needs assistance in all areas of daily living."

Instead of "high functioning," use "capable," "able to do many things."

*Use language that projects a valued presence for people with disabilities. Model ways for people to speak to or about them.*

Instead of "low functioning," use "needs assistance in many areas," "many needs for support."

Instead of "was placed," use "moved into a new home."

Instead of "non-ambulatory," use "uses a wheelchair."

Instead of "ambulatory," use "able to walk."

Instead of "non-verbal," use "doesn't use words but is able to communicate by smiles, gestures, pointing, etc..."

Instead of "outing," use "going out with friends," "going shopping," "dining out," "taking a coffee break," "going to a movie," etc.

Instead of "verbal," use "able to speak, able to tell a story, able to ask for help."

## Tell great stories about next steps

### *Affiliating with religious organizations*

**OLD** is holding services at home or program for all. **BETTER** is having people attend community services on a regular basis. **BEST** is becoming involved as members, participating in special causes and special events such as dinners, bazaars, socials, volunteer projects. Mavis helped Joe make the best community connections to her church.

### *Knowing the neighborhood*

**OLD** is enjoying the backyard and front porch or program entrance. **BETTER** is

taking group walks around the neighborhood, stopping to talk and frequenting local stores. **BEST** is taking individual walks, establishing personal connections with the neighbors, taking advantage of local stores and being a regular. Louisa and Tyeast became so connected that Louisa decided to move to the neighborhood too!



*As Joe's frog grew, so did his community connections at a local pet store.*

*Great visual image!*

### *Developing hobbies*

**OLD** is having an interest pursued at home. **BETTER** is taking a person to purchase supplies at a local store on a regular basis. **BEST** is getting to know store employees as customers and friends, as was the case with Joe and Sondra.

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[WWW.OMR.STATE.NY.US](http://WWW.OMR.STATE.NY.US).



*Taking Action:*

- *The celebration of significant events with important people in our lives is a meaningful way to strengthen our relationships with others. Whether the events are traditionally recognized, such as birthdays or graduations, or some newly emerging life celebrations, such as entry into adulthood or honoring a personal transition, these events give us the opportunity to pause, reflect on and appreciate our journey.*
- *Think about how you can create occasions for a particular person. Identify their birthday and the birthdays of their family and friends and enter the information into a personal calendar or celebration file. Include anniversaries, special achievements, holidays or local events that would be of interest to them. Remember to send acknowledgements in the form of telephone calls, cards, flowers (hand delivered or sent by florist), food, or gifts.*

## LISTEN to people with your heart, see into their souls: Be consistent and allow trust to develop over time

Barbara grew up in a developmental center and hurt herself so much that blanket restraints and even a lobotomy were used to control her behaviors - all without success. Even after interventions were discontinued, Barbara continued wrapping herself in a blanket. Over time she lost her sight, which only encouraged her isolation.

Audrey first met Barbara following her move to her community home. Barbara still would not come out from underneath her blanket. Audrey worked slowly, starting at the door and moving closer and closer to Barbara's bed. Barbara finally let Audrey touch her without screaming or showing physical resistance. Barbara eventually began to sit with people in the family room instead of her bedroom, and ventured on neighborhood walks and trips into the community. Barbara stopped screaming when she learned to use some words.

Now Barbara shops in stores, always carrying a small sensory item in her hand. Barbara replaces the old item with a new item that she wants to buy. She enjoys listening to music at the music store, and

buys her own CDs. Most notably, she is a regular at the library, a quiet place that really tests her progress. Here she borrows CDs and enjoys textured books. She eats in restaurants, visits her friends, and goes swimming.

Audrey watched and learned the keys to Barbara's "soul" and built upon those keys to promote membership, even under difficult circumstances.

*To follow up on lessons learned, think about how you can be an "ambassador" for a person who has difficulty communicating. Take people out, individually and consistently, into community settings, especially to places the person will enjoy. Become a regular. Allow people to represent themselves and empower them to be as independent as possible. Have a discussion with the person using their own method of communication. Model communication and interaction so that others will understand how to interact. Encourage members in the community to speak directly to the person; they should not use staff as a means to communicate.*

*Assist the person in getting their needs met without taking over the process. Respect choice, even if it is not a choice you would have made, to acknowledge their adulthood and individuality. And remember, Repetition is the Key.*



*Theme 2: Be a good listener. Find a quiet place and practice patience. Learn about people's interests. Use a quiet voice. Be idealistic but make suggestions that are within people's reach.*

# Everyday Heroes

## Building Direct Support Leadership for Community Inclusion

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### Module 5: Bringing Everyday Heroes Ideas into Your Own Agency

April 2006

#### The heroes tell us...

- “People have marvelous gifts to offer, but some of them are in hiding. It takes just the right kind of attention to encourage them to come out and shine!”
- “These men now walk with their heads up. Their posture says I am confident in who I am. They are always smiling and have made more friends than anyone can count.”
- “Who could have ever imagined that a frog could open so many community doors?”

## Everyday Heroes and Organizational Change

The Everyday Heroes initiative shows how the lives of people with developmental disabilities are changed when direct support, management and clinical systems partner together.

With Everyday Heroes, direct support workers use their working knowledge to help develop individual strategies to build community lives for people. After all, the Hero spends so much time with the person and is best able to contribute to planning. Staff are also challenged to use their expertise to make “the community their classroom.”

The efforts of direct support professionals and clinicians are enhanced when agency managers integrate the Everyday

Heroes values within their organizations, using a wide variety of creative strategies to do so. Key investments focus on transportation options, purchasing and other fiscal practices, scheduling, staff training and orientation.

When management works with its heroes, everyone wins! Direct support staff feel a sense of accomplishment and are valued within their organizations. Agencies benefit from new innovations and lessons learned. Most importantly, people with developmental disabilities experience satisfaction that comes from community membership, from giving as well as receiving, from learning as well as teaching, and by living their dreams.



At the heart of Everyday Heroes is the expectation that community building is continually evolving. What is best practice now may change; over time, these practices will be matched and enhanced for people.

## Weave the values into agency life

A critical factor in the success of Everyday Heroes has been the commitment of agencies to:

- its direct support professionals;
- person centered planning; and
- community inclusion.

Agencies should integrate good ideas from their heroes and create processes that fit their unique scope and character. Many agencies are challenging themselves to individualize services, even when they serve many people. They are focusing on imaginative ways for people to connect with their communities.

It is important to document and share creative strategies within and between agencies that enhance the role of direct support professionals. These staff inspire others with their stories, and create energy for agency-wide implementation and organizational change. This momentum is the “train to change” for us all.

#### Inside this module:

Share a musical journey in self expression and membership

Learning from others 2

Learning from others 2

Work as an alternative to site-based day programs

Learning from others 3

Learning from others 3

Build off a theme to make community connections

## CELEBRATE Life, CREATE COMMUNITY: Share a musical journey in self expression and membership

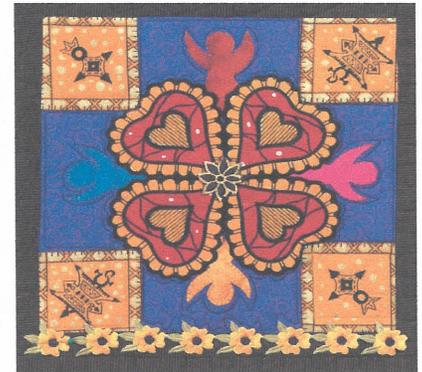
Stefan recognized Paul immediately to be an imaginative man without an outlet to express his creative gifts. People found him difficult to approach, but Stefan found they had a few things in common. They enjoyed making people laugh, they had great imaginations, and they loved to sing.

Stefan and Paul began to write and sing songs together. Stefan encouraged Paul to be creative. He helped Paul refine his songs and soon realized his broad range of talent. Paul asked if they could make a record, and though it seemed impossible, Stefan never said "no." Cara found a music studio nearby, and made a request to the agency for the necessary funds. She

was able to convince the Director that his support would make a difference in Paul's life. The agency took the risk and so began Paul's recording career!

Paul has received positive attention for his music. He has made and sold full-length CDs, starred in videos, performed live and jammed with fellow musicians. He has received standing ovations and smiles some of the brightest smiles ever seen.

Paul's progress is a testimony to Stefan's commitment to learn what was important to Paul; Cara's support in working with management; and the agency's willingness to support new experiences for people.



*Theme 9: Find and share inspiration. Get connected to a local club, café, coffeehouse. Use the energy of music or art to make local connections. Consider career options in the arts.*

## Learning from others: Support staff by listening and rewarding success

Just as we need to listen to the people we serve, it is important to support ways for staff to be heard. When one agency introduced Everyday Heroes to its large day treatment program, they created a steering committee, gave the project its own name, and supported staff in each program room to create community one person at a time. Each staff was asked to generate a project that would support the person's community connections. To provide a time for sharing and brainstorming, all the staff met monthly after program, from

*Staff who feel respect and value for their contributions will find their work fulfilling and support people to have the lives they want.*

2:30 PM to 4:00 PM, to share ideas and present good stories. The forums also provided a chance for staff to ask for resources. One critical need was for transportation; although near neighborhood stores, the sidewalks

were uneven and vehicles would make trips to community locations easier. In response to staff requests, the agency made monies available for taxi service and a new wheelchair van was ordered. The agency also provided the monies necessary to make new projects happen. The focus in each program room generated ideas and enthusiasm for everyone served in the program. The forums gave the agency a chance to acknowledge and reward success.

## Learning from others: Use networking and monetary incentives

Themes of the month have proven to be a great way to promote change. One very small agency that operates Day Programs Without Walls for 35 people launched its initiative by bringing together 20 direct support professionals every month. The staff work in pairs to present a theme to the entire group, and lead a discussion about that theme. The staff are given a small bonus for completing Everyday Heroes training, and staff are promoted when they begin to mentor a new staff person.

While the monetary award is appreciated, feeling respected is priceless! The direct support professionals enjoy the chance to teach their peers. However, the networking time is also valued as they all work in one-to-one situations and enjoy sharing ideas. They look to each other on ways they determine



the risks and benefits to their actions, and use their connections to gain access to new opportunities. The agency encourages staff to use various media, including poetry and stories, at agency-wide meetings to report on their progress with people.

## I BELIEVE, Do You? Work as an alternative to site-based day programs

Marjorie and Jewel have worked with Sidney and Evan since the Take Out Café opened three years ago. While co-workers were not sure that these men were the right people to work in the Café, Marjorie and Jewel saw their potential. Their story illustrates the theme, "I believe, do you!"

The Café was immediately successful and Sidney and Evan proved their abilities. They sell coffee and donuts to customers each morning, and enjoy daily shopping trips to buy fruits and baked goods. Local merchants know them because they are back so often. They tell Marjorie when supplies are low or out, so they make a shopping list to restock. She encourages them to go into stores independently to make their purchases, while she stands

close by to support them. Menus from many restaurants are also posted in the café, and Evan and Sidney take lunch orders. They pick up the lunches and deliver them to their customers.

At first, Evan was shy and Sidney had difficulties respecting boundaries. Now, Evan seeks out people in the community. Sidney is more focused and understands that he must respect people's personal space.

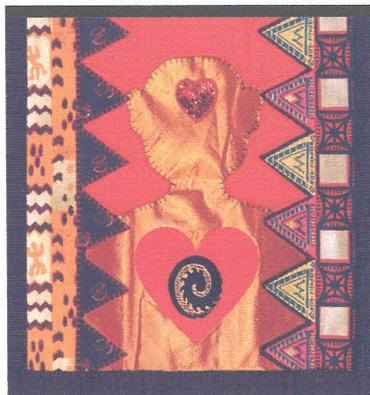
This story shows the value of entrepreneurship in lieu of traditional site-based services. The Café offered Sidney and Evan a chance to make a unique contribution in work and in their associations with others.



*Theme 4: Imagine that every person wants to do something with his or her life. Expect the best in people. Take action to make dreams happen. Focus on what people can do, not what they cannot do.*

## Learning from others: Use Everyday Heroes to teach the themes and orient new staff

Think about individuals, but act across multiple locations. One agency implemented its own Everyday Heroes initiative by identifying two Heroes from each of its homes. The Heroes and their residential supervisors met for a day, from 9:30 AM to 2:00 PM, once each quarter, so there were often 60 people in the room sharing stories. Each Hero identified one individual with disabilities, who was the focus of their work, and people shared their ideas and progress with each other.



The agency subsequently made a video that features direct support professionals who either describe a theme or provide a story on their efforts to implement the theme. More than 75 direct support staff were involved in the preparation of this video, which has been used agency-wide to recruit and inspire new staff and to promote the ideal of community inclusion as an expectation of direct support work with people.

## Learning from others: Make lifestyle changes throughout an organization

Consider replication of the Everyday Heroes curriculum and host an event to celebrate change. One large agency made a commitment to introduce the Everyday Heroes values by implementing a Learning Institute for 20 direct support professionals and 20 partner staff from across all its programs. The group met together for three days over a six-month period and participated in learning sessions from the Everyday Heroes curriculum. The Heroes and partners presented their final accom-

plishments at a large agency-wide holiday event that hosted about 200 people from throughout the agency and the community.

This recognition event was an excellent celebration of the richness of life in their community. It was also a chance for the agency to honor direct support professionals, people with disabilities, family and community members for their collective good citizenship and contribution to others.



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*Taking Action:*

- *How has your agency already incorporated the Everyday Heroes values within the organization? How have people’s lives changed?*
- *Think about operations in your program/agency. Identify the things that work and the things that don’t work. Look for the practices that result in inclusion and those that do not. Brainstorm ideas to bring ideas back to your agency. Be imaginative. Pick one or two priorities that you want to focus on immediately.*
- *What help will you need from administration to support implementation of your ideas?*

## Nurture RELATIONSHIPS with community members: Build off a theme to make community connections

Sondra was immediately impressed by Joe when she met him. He had a great personality and was quite the joker once you got to know him, but he would rarely come out of his room. She wanted to find a way to get him involved with others and connected to his community.

A friend gave Joe an albino frog as a gift and Joe became instantly attached. Sondra and Joe started by reading up on the life of a frog, which led them to the local pet store to buy supplies. This became quite an adventure. His frog grew and grew and grew as Joe discovered a funny thing: the frog ate the fish he bought for the tank. He ended up buying a 50 gallon tank just for his frog.

Sondra was able to help Joe develop relationships by going to the same place on a regular basis. Joe made a special connection with the owners and employees at this small pet store. He has become great friends with the employees. They appreciate hearing about

the frog and marvel at its progress. But the progress doesn’t end with the frog. Joe and Sondra have developed a closer working relationship and Joe has evolved from a quiet and reserved person to an outspoken and friendly socialite. He knows people and is a valued customer and friend. Joe and Sondra have been invited to give many presentations; at first, Joe would stand in the

back of the room, not willing to come up and talk. He now stands proudly next to Sondra and tells the story himself. Not only has he made friends, but his success has enhanced his sense of self-esteem. The telling of his story has been used to help motivate organizational change in the agency.

*As a follow up to lessons learned, think about management strategies to strengthen relationships between direct support staff and people with disabilities. Consider the role of staff in shaping the vision for people and the agency. Arrange forums and other situations where heroes and the people they serve are able to talk about current inclusion practices, goals, roadblocks, volunteerism, community education, outreach and cooperative ventures. This dialogue will allow for learning together and clear away the barriers that prevent staff from taking action. Listen to what people want for their lives. Think about ways your agency can take direction from Heroes in exploring new ideas and supporting personal dreams.*



*Theme 1: Meet the neighbors. Frequent the same stores and build relationships with employees. Look at your own life for leads and connections.*

"I and i feel like you do"

song Written By Rohan Robinson, Westchester ARC



Rohan's song, "I and i Feel Like You Do" honors the depth of feeling shared by people with developmental disabilities and their heroes, who face the pain of discrimination and rejection when they seek inclusion. With patience and persistence, people become accepted and belong as valued members of community life, which this song also celebrates.

How could you look in my eyes and abuse me  
How could you look in my eyes and refuse me  
This is my life not a movie  
This is not news for the TV, Cho

I and i feel pain like you do  
I and i feel anger like you do  
I and i feel sadness like you do  
And i And i feel joy too  
I and i need loving like you do  
I and i need greetings like you do  
I and i need the same things like you do  
So treat i like i treat you

Such a thin line between love and hate  
So patience and compassion i celebrate  
What i can't control i appreciate  
And everything else will fall in place  
The things people do to me makes little sense  
Like being discriminated against  
But what they don't know I'll never be bent  
I persevere through my resilience, Cho

I don't know why i am the way i am  
I didn't ask to be the way i am  
All i know i am the way i am  
And i am alot more than what they say i am  
All i ever wanted was the right  
To do what ever i like  
Have the opportunities to make the choice  
To do the things that empower my life, Cho

so now you know me  
I hope a little love you'll show me  
This is my story  
And to the most high be the glory  
How could you look in my eyes and abuse me  
How could you look in my eyes and refuse me

This is my life not a movie - This is not news for the TV

# EVERYDAY HEROES

## Building Direct Support Leadership for Community Inclusion

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## THANKS TO ALL OUR HEROES