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Spotlight

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November 1, 2018

Welcome to *DSP Spotlight*, IAC's annual publication to celebrate the life-changing work of Direct Support Professionals employed by our member agencies.

In this edition, you will meet 25 people who make life more meaningful, rewarding and fun for the people they support.

Please join us in congratulating these pillars of our field who stand as examples for all of us!

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Abbott House

Cecelia Parker



Cecelia's is one of Abbott House's stars! Her outstanding effort and commitment to excellence shines brightly in her work. At Abbott House for 18 years, she is always willing to lend a helping hand and has been a big comfort for the ladies in her residence. Her kindness, compassion, patience, strength and interest in people makes her wonderful to work with. Both staff and residents are happy just to be around her! Cecelia is loved and admired by both her fellow staff and those she supports. Said one resident, "I love her like she was my own mom."

Abbott House



Ercelia Vidal

In Ercelia's seven years at Abbott House she has been a strong and compassionate advocate for the people she supports. Here is just one of many examples. One of the men she supports was very close with his grandmother who would prepare his favorite Spanish meals every weekend. When she passed away, he was devastated. Ercelia decided to teach him how to prepare the Spanish dishes his Grandmother made for him which cheered him significantly and has awakened a new interest in cooking! Ercelia also cooks elaborate Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners for the individuals she supports to make holidays special, particularly for those who don't have family to celebrate with. "I love Ercelia" and "Ercelia is my angel" are just two of the sentiments expressed by people at Abbott House!

ADAPT Community Network

Victoria Lindner



Victoria's dedication to the work she does at Adapt Community's Community Habilitation Program is exemplary and can be seen in the profound effect she has had on a particular little girl. Joy and her mom Lisa are grateful for Victoria's life changing support! Through the use of videos, books, music and games in addition to love and encouragement, Joy has improved in every way and has become quite an independent 10 year old. Victoria's devoted and genuinely nurturing support has made all the difference for this family!

ADAPT Community Network

Sofia Rodriguez



For the past ten years, Sofia has been dedicated and committed to the people she supports. For over three years, people receiving services from Adapt Community Network have benefited from her reliability, flexibility and caring. Her sense of humor and positive attitude are contagious and she is respected and admired by both co-workers and program participants. Sofia comes in, even on days she is scheduled to be off, to bring people to concerts, exhibitions, plays, shows and movies. She goes above and beyond and sets a high standard for all employees at Adapt Community Network.

AHRC Nassau

Oral Jeffers & Steven Daniels



This lifesaving pair of Direct Support Professionals are a godsend everyday but here is one example of their dedication and heroism. On July 19, 2018, while supporting three individuals working on a meals on wheels run, the van kept stalling. Oral pulled over to check under the hood and observed smoke! Oral and Steven instantly sprang into action helping the three program participants, two of whom were wheelchair users, from the van. They discovered that the lift wasn't working. Oral & Steven calmly and swiftly unlocked the wheelchairs and carried the people and their wheelchairs off of the van. From a safe distance the five of them watched as the van became engulfed in flames. For this and their everyday compassion and support, program participants, their families and the staff at AHRC Nassau are grateful!

Alricka Francis



Few people seem better suited to be a Direct Support Professional than this mom of 17 year old triplets. "AHRC used to send a lady to my home to come help with my kids so I could have some time for myself," Alricka reports. "I started working for AHRC because it's something I always wanted to do". At the Bellerose residence where she supports six residents in becoming important members of their community, Alricka helps them with a multitude of daily activities including recycling, gardening, cooking, diabetes management and engaging in community activities. She coordinates these activities, for example, vegetables from the garden become part of the menu they create and prepare and money from recyclables goes toward restaurant outings. Alricka is appreciated by the people she supports, their families and her co-workers and supervisors.

Sanjida Chowdhury



Sanjida is a caring and committed DSP who also has excellent technical skills! One of the people she supports, Abraham Alsoora uses a communication device to express himself. Thanks to Sanjida, he has learned to use his “voice” to fully participate in life. Abraham now can express his unique needs and feelings but also participates in discussions on current affairs and political issues. Sanjida’s dedicated communication partnership with Abraham enables him to always be prepared and to be an informed and active member of his community. Thanks to Sanjida, Abraham feels pride in his skills and delights in communicating!

Arc of Rockland

Krista Lavender



Krista spends time and effort to make each day a wonderful experience for the individuals with whom she works. She loves to cook, presenting various recipes and assisting program participants in meal preparation. Krista initiated an annual field day with activities like balloon toss, hula hoop toss, egg races and lawn darts. One field day participant stated, "oh man, I had a blast, I went home with the biggest smile on my face that day!" to which Krista stated, "hearing him say that was amazing. That's the whole reason I wanted to hold an event like field day." Krista's enthusiasm and commitment are apparent to all who know her!

Arc of Rockland

Guy Saintel



Guy provides encouragement and guidance to all the people he supports. Always smiling, he will do what it takes for program participants to succeed in whatever they choose to do. He is genuine and caring and truly “walks the walk”. A few years ago, Guy went to Florida on vacation. Someone he once supported at the ARC of Rockland had moved to Florida with his family and Guy made a point of visiting with them while there. Needless to say they were all thrilled to see him again! Guy truly believes that everyone is capable of achieving their goals and instills that belief in everyone he comes into contact with. He recently began work toward a Masters in Social Work to further his career – Guy is certainly the kind of person we need in our field!

Jessica Freese



Jessica's energetic and positive demeanor is contagious! She is dependable and responsible. Both the women at the residences where she works and her co-workers sing her praises. A team player, she treats everyone with respect and dignity. She is always on the lookout for new adventures for the ladies in her residence and is a true advocate whether on medical appointments, at ISP meetings or even just clothing shopping. She is thoughtful, caring, admired, respected, determined and committed to making sure that needs are met and everything runs smoothly.

DDI

Jonathan Insalaco



Jonathan's pleasant, positive attitude makes people feel comfortable around him. He goes the extra mile, working extra shifts when needed and providing extra support to anyone in need. His bright, cheerful attitude, commitment and dedication make him an indispensable member of the team. He is a patient and caring leader who takes time to get to know the people he supports and is a role model who assists in training new co-workers. He often sacrifices his personal time for the needs of "the guys and the house".

DDI

LaVaughnza Jackson



LaVaughnza goes above and beyond on a regular basis! She manages a children's residence and is on top of it! She handles "extremely difficult behaviors with elegance and ease". She continually offers creative help and suggestions to help her kids, her staff and clinicians. She is an excellent communicator and never gives less than 100%. She demonstrates "a remarkable capacity for empathy" and is professional, kind and caring with excellent critical thinking skills and is there for anyone who needs her!

FREE

Joanne Mineo



Joanne is an exceptional example of a dedicated employee and caregiver. She has continually shown herself to be a positive, uplifting spirit and an excellent role model. She provides support as needed whether during usual working hours or not – helping people in the community from early morning till late at night, assisting in applying for college courses, providing home-cooked meals and visits during physically and mentally trying times and doing what it takes to make sure families can be together on holidays. The lasting relationships Joanne has built with the people she supports and their families make her like family to them. As they are like family to her.

HeartShare

Claudia Fraser



Here is Terrance and his Direct Support Professional, Claudia Fraser. Claudia helped Terrance, who is a non-verbal individual, pursue his creative interests such as writing and acting. More than that, Claudia helped him recognize his passions and achieve his goals through persistence, patience and careful observation of how he communicates. Claudia has worked for HeartShare for the past 5 years, and continues to be an example of what it means to be a DSP, from her quality of care, contributions to programmatic excellence, and her advocacy efforts for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Winnifred Thompson



Here is Direct Support Professional Winnifred Thompson with Dennis who lives at HeartShare's Sharkey I Residence in Queens. Dennis experiences anxiety when in unfamiliar settings. He was especially taken off guard when Winnifred and Dennis visited their local library and were not welcomed by the patrons. Upon spotting Dennis, one mother fearfully wrapped her arms around her child. Winnifred did not find this acceptable, so she walked up to the mother with Dennis and introduced him. "Don't be afraid. We will not hurt you," Winnifred said. Due to several interactions like this one, Winnifred and Dennis are now greeted with waves or a friendly hello from patrons and staff alike. Winnifred saw a change in Dennis as well. Instead of vocalizing loudly, Dennis is physically relaxed, and is able to engage with the vividly illustrated books he came to the library to enjoy. HeartShare is appreciative of DSPs like Winnifred, who take courageous steps every day towards greater inclusion and acceptance of people with disabilities.

Heaven's Hands Community Services

Irving Chase



Irving is a vital team member in his program and has brought energy and enthusiasm to his work from day one. He has developed an excellent rapport with the people he supports, observant of changes in demeanor and body language that precede challenging behaviors. Irving's patience, enthusiasm and respectful attitude tells program participants they are important -- he has passion for his work and genuine concern for them. Very little fazes Irving, who is a true example for others to follow both at his program and in the community.

Heaven's Hands Community Services



Jerald Hayes

Although on the job just one year, Jerald has proven himself as a professional with an exceptional work ethic. He always pitches in when needed and is compassionate and person-first oriented. Jerald also possess the elusive skill of balancing great service to the people he supports AND submitting timely and professional documentation! A highlight for Jerald this year was teaching Shane Osborne to ride his bike. Shane and his family are grateful for Jerald's help in achieving this milestone!

ILA

Shernelle Phillips-Proverbs



Shernelle's compassion and warmth are appreciated by everyone where she works -- she is appreciated by program participants, co-workers and supervisors. While everyone at the program benefits from her work, she has been especially instrumental in one program participant's growth. Sulley worked with Shernelle to discover his love of birds and flowers, which Shernelle turned into a volunteer opportunity for Sulley at a local flower shop. Shernelle helped Sulley to learn the job and create meaningful relationships with co-workers and management. Sulley has learned valuable skills, like teamwork, working alongside Shernelle who enjoys bragging about his accomplishments. Shernelle has even created a scrap book which shows off his work at the flower shop !

ILA



Yemisi Omaye

Oluwayemisi (Yemisi) is passionate about her work. Always with a smile, she supports the people who live at Lamoka Avenue Residence with great effect and determination. With patience and love, she accompanies people in the community, assists them with meal prep, taking medication and accomplishing their activities of daily living. Yemisi is well respected by both residents and co-workers. She is a team player and an example for all to follow. According to her supervisor, "Oluwayemisi Omaye is one of the most caring, hardworking, efficient and dedicated staff persons I have ever had the pleasure of working with."

Lifespire

Arlene Joseph (AJ)



Arlene (known as AJ) has formed amazing bonds with the people she supports. Building on participants' interests and strengths, AJ implemented clubs and community outings such as the poetry club, dance club and a group that explores landmarks throughout New York City. Her passion for music was the magic touch that transformed the services in her program. Collaborating with her team, AJ has directed Motown, Hip-Hop, and R&B shows and the Great Gatsby Winter Fashion Show. They are now working on a production of songs from Grease. AJ is the highlight of the day for program participants and a welcome creative addition for all!

Katherine Mingot



Katherine has been with LifeSpire for 15 years and became their first certified travel trainer in 2014. She starts by going to each person's home, meeting with her travel trainee and their family. With patience and determination, she learns their preferences and teaches travelling skills to increase independence, confidence, safety and inclusion. Kathy never doubts the ability of the individuals she trains and has made dreams come true for 35 individuals so far! That is truly changing peoples' lives for the better!

Urban Resource Institute



Nereida Finley

Nereida's exemplary "can-do" attitude inspires the individuals she supports and the co-workers she collaborates with. She is the proud mother of a 22 year old son with autism and is dedicated to helping program participants achieve self-sufficiency and independence. She pitches in to do intake screening, job development and work readiness training. Her very creative problem solving, patience and perseverance results in success for those she supports and their families, employers and co-workers. Compassion, warmth, intelligence and humor round out her successful approach .

WellLife Network

Guerline Augustin



Guerline is a dedicated and compassionate employee, described by her peers as someone who personifies kindness, care and meticulousness. She is always there for the people she supports. In particular, one woman has sharply reduced her number of hospitalizations and increased her participation in the day program as a result of Guerline's consistent interventions and dedication. The smiles on program participants' faces is all the proof needed that she is loved. Management, staff and service recipients respect her tenacity and her dedication is reflected in her willingness to take extra shifts no matter the time of day, as needed.

WellLife Network



Kenisha Bourne

Kenisha is a dedicated Direct Support Professional who goes above and beyond the call of duty. An example of this was her willingness to adjust her schedule, coming in early and leaving late to accompany service recipients on medical appointments when another staff member was out on medical leave. While this was an additional burden, Kenisha was spot-on and thorough, maintaining meticulous documentation and collaborating with the nurse and other medical professionals to ensure that everyone got what they needed. WellLife Network truly appreciates Kenisha Bourne!
