



Outlook

People First News, Special ADA Edition, July 2025

From Office for People With Developmental Disabilities <NYSOPWDD@public.govdelivery.com>

Date Fri 7/25/2025 12:57 PM

To Claudia Vidal <cvidal@esperanzacenter.com>

Special ADA Edition

Celebrating 35 Years of Access & Advocacy People First News, July 2025



Happy Birthday to the Americans with Disabilities Act!

It's July and here in New York we have been celebrating Disability Pride all month long as well as the anniversary of the ADA - the landmark law that makes so much possible for so many. Thank you to all of you who joined us at the Empire State Plaza earlier this month for our grand celebration. In this issue, you'll see some photos from this year's event as well as some of the new materials we unveiled at this year's celebration: [A Rights Booklet](#) coauthored with the Self-

Advocacy Association of New York State and a [Commemorative Book](#) on the Milestones in the Disability Rights Movement. All of these materials are available on our website. You'll also see [links to new videos](#) we've created highlighting what accessibility means that we hope you will share widely to increase awareness.

As we celebrate this 35th Anniversary, we're reminded that the rights we fought for are precious and that our continued attention and advocacy is required to preserve and protect them. People with disabilities are *people first* and entitled to the same rights as people without disabilities. It's a message we'll never stop repeating. Thank you for your partnership and your continued advocacy.

partnership and your continued advocacy.

Rights, Responsibilities and Advocacy Booklet

As a person with a developmental disability, you have the right to choose your own path and to live your life with as much freedom as possible. Everyone has the same rights protected by the United States and New York State Constitution, but additional rights exist in law and regulation about the services and supports you receive. If you live in a home operated by a provider agency, you have additional rights to protect your privacy and make choices about your living situation. [Read more in the book created by OPWDD and SANYS.](#)

See What Advocacy In Action Looks Like

[Make Your Rights Work for You video](#)

Highlights from New York's 35th ADA Celebration at the Empire State Plaza in Albany



OPWDD Commissioner Willow Baer welcomed the crowd to the Empire State Plaza at the celebration of the 35th Anniversary of the ADA.

FLAME the Band



New York's Chief Disability Officer, Kim Hill-Ridley, introduces FLAME the Band, before their performance at the 35th Celebration of the ADA at the Empire State Plaza. FLAME is the internationally acclaimed band from the Lexington, Chapter of The Arc New York who spread hope and inspiration through their music. [Learn more about FLAME](#)

FREE Drum & Bugle Corps





The Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. [FREE] Drum & Bugle Corps and their Color Guard gave an energetic performance at the 35th Anniversary Celebration of the Americans With Disabilities Act. The FREE Players Drum & Bugle Corps describes themselves as "the 1st differently abled Drum & Bugle Corps/Marching Band in the world." The Corps was established in 2010 to provide new opportunities to people of all abilities, all across Long Island NY, who are aspiring musicians, dancers, actors and athletes. [Learn more about the Drum & Bugle Corps.](#)

Media Coverage about New York's ADA Celebration

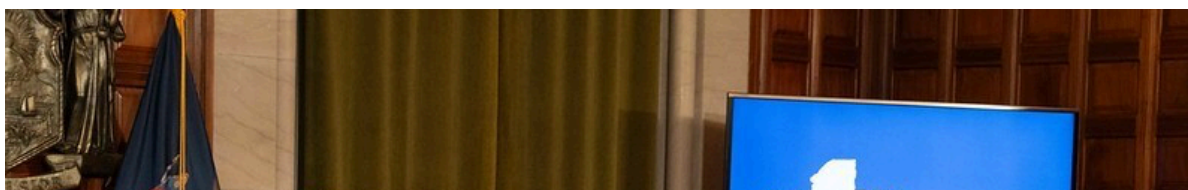
- [See photos on the Albany Times Union Photo Gallery](#)
 - [See coverage of the event and interviews with advocates and with Commissioner Willow Baer that aired on CBS 6 Albany](#)
-

Standing With Self-Advocates



OPWDD Commissioner Willow Baer stands with self-advocates including Chester Finn and ARC of New York Executive Director Erik Geizer at a rally Governor Hochul held in the Hudson Valley opposing federal cuts to Medicaid that would adversely impact New Yorkers who rely on Medicaid funding and food stamps.

Pushing Back against Federal Cuts





Commissioner Willow Baer joined Governor Kathy Hochul's post-cabinet meeting press conference to address the devastating impact federal cuts will have on New Yorkers, including those with disabilities. As the Governor said in her remarks, "Medicaid is literally the lifeline for one in three New Yorkers." Under the leadership of Governor Hochul, OPWDD remains committed to protecting vital services and ensuring people with developmental disabilities continue to receive the support they need. [View the Governor's remarks.](#)

Save the Date for the NYS Fair!



August 20 - September 1

Visit nysfair.ny.gov for more information

The Great New York State Fair will be here before we know it! Be sure to visit us in the Science & Industry Building when you're visiting the Fair. Be sure to also mark your calendar for Sensory Friendly Day on Wednesday, August 27. From 9:00 a.m. through 1:00 p.m., many rides on the Midway will operate without lights while sounds, music, and public address announcements throughout The Fair will be reduced or limited to accommodate those with sensitivities. [Visit the Fair's webpage.](#)

What's New on the OPWDD Website

You may have noticed that the OPWDD website has a new look and feel. If you haven't visited in a while, take a moment to check it out.

Here are some other recent updates that may interest you.

- [ADA at 35](#)
- [ADA timeline](#)
- [Rights Booklet](#)
- [A new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Page](#)
- [Updated Benefit Development Resource Kit](#)

Stay Connected with New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities:



[866-946-9733](tel:866-946-9733)
opwdd.ny.gov

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES:

[Manage Subscriptions](#) | [Unsubscribe All](#) | [Help](#)

This email was sent to cvidal@esperanzacenter.com using GovDelivery Communications Cloud, on behalf of: New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities · 44 Holland Avenue · Albany, NY 12229

