**NOMINATION – ZACH WEINMANN**

Sometimes when you meet a person, their positive energy and passion for doing good sweeps over you. Such is the case when you meet Zach Weinmann and observe him in his role of an Autism Lead and Work Skills Supervisor at the PAI Parkway program. He is a true advocate for the individuals served by PAI, building avenues to enhance relationships, opening up opportunities within the community and enriching lives in personal and meaningful ways.

Zach’s commitment to bring about progressive changes for individuals at PAI can be seen even when the path is not easy. A case in point is when a library staff requested that individuals Zach was supporting not attend the weekly story-telling time due to traits that were seen as disruptive. Zach was not deterred by this rejection and returned to the library on his own time to meet with the staff making the request. He provided them with information about PAI’s services and our mission to connect individuals to their communities. He offered to provide training to them and others at the library on how to welcome and support individuals with disabilities. Zach took it a step further and then connected them with the PAI Volunteer Coordinator to explore partnerships. Soon after, the group returned to the library’s program. Singlehandedly and motivated by his powerful sense of advocacy for the individuals at PAI, Zach was able to turn around a potentially failing community connection into a positive experience for everyone.

In another advocacy endeavor, Zach proposed to employer partners a dramatic change to an hourly wage for several in-center contracts. He was successful in this bold move and as a result the wages earned by the PAI workers have increased. Zach also added two new vendors, further expanding the workers’ earning opportunities. Wage conversions and work expansions are difficult, but Zach applied his advocacy skills and perseverance and made these changes happen, to the benefit of the workers.

Zach has been at PAI for 4 years during which time he has been awarded the PAI Pillar Award for reliable and high quality service delivery. He is an engaged, eager team member and has demonstrated leadership qualities. He does the work to make things better and will approach situations with ideas for solutions, rather than excuses for inaction. He has an outgoing, humor-filled personality, but he is also quiet and attentive when someone needs extra time and care during periods of transition or stress. Zach brings fun and resourcefulness into his training classes, such when he takes a group to a store to pick out appropriate interview attire rather than just talking about it or looking a photos.

Zach’s positive, proactive and person-centered support of individuals at PAI are all key factors that make him a valued and exemplary DSP. PAI is proud to nominate Zach Weinmann for the MOHR DSP Award.