

2017 Self-Determination Luncheon, Continued ...



Dennis Lamb



Jessica Merriam and DJ Butler



Julia Booz



Isabel Rodriguez



Michael Giffing



Clifford Moore and Gerald Wheaton

There were miles of smiles at the 2017 Self-Determination Luncheon, held Sunday, November 12, at the Coatesville Country Club. More than 230 people attended the event to recognize and celebrate the award nominees and the ten individuals who won awards. The program included music provided by individuals with intellectual disability. Peter Keares played the piano and Matthew Reilly was the event DJ. The winners in each category are listed below.

Community Participation – Dennis Lamb and Michael Giffing were both honored. Lamb has served with several local fire companies for 50 years. He is currently involved with the Alert company in Thorndale.

Giffing, who serves on the self-determination committee, also travels to Harrisburg to advocate for people with disabilities and has volunteered as a scorekeeper for a community baseball team.

Employment – Travis Walls and Julia Booz were both honored in this category. Travis Walls, who has been working with a job coach, secured his first job at the K-Mart in Thorndale this year. As part of this job training, Walls took a class to learn how to use the computer system at his place of employment.

Julia Booz, a 2017 graduate, was hired at WaWa a month after starting there as a volunteer. She proudly wears her uniform to work and is always willing to help out for special events in the store.

Responsibility and Community Independence – Patrick Conner was the sole recipient of this award. The 53-year-old has lived independently for most of his adult life. He has worked at the Shop-Rite in West Chester for 11 years, and uses public transportation to travel locally.

Self-Advocacy – Authur McMillan and Isabel Rodriguez were both honored in this category. Authur, or A.J. to his friends, made major life changes while managing multiple diagnoses. He graduated from the Child and Career Development Center in Coatesville, obtained employment, got his driver's license, and with the support of his family and his professional support team, was able to wean himself off of medication.

Isabel Rodriguez demonstrated extraordinary bravery to self-advocate when she was physically abused while living in a residence in Massachusetts. She moved to Chester County, away from the majority of her family, and has continued to advocate for the relationships and boundaries she would like in her life.

Against All Odds – Ralph Crowther and Linda Singer were both honored. Crowther, who experienced an almost fatal aortic dissection earlier this year, has undergone numerous related health concerns, rehabilitation and recovery. Throughout his health journey, he never lost his humor or his ability to smile.

Linda Singer has advocated for herself in many areas of her life, from finding a job she enjoys and living independently. She is currently being treated for breast cancer, and is working hard to deal with side effects, and hopefully soon, get back to work.

Dickie Geiger Award – This award was created to memorialize the self-advocate who lived in Downingtown. Gerald Wheaton received this award for “turning his life around.” In the past three years, he has moved to a new retirement community, followed a diet plan to lose weight and a budget to save enough money to do some traveling. He's been to Washington, D.C. and toured Lancaster County, and now saving to visit Niagara Falls, NY.

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