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RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

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**2017 Direct Support
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Excellence in Action!

By Barbara Merrill, Esq.
ANCOR CEO

Wait until you read about the extraordinary people profiled in these pages – ANCOR's 2017 Direct Support Professional Recognition Award Recipients embody excellence in action. On behalf of the entire ANCOR community, thank you! ANCOR's National Advocacy Campaign is all about you – recognizing that each and every day you support people to realize the promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Your stories – and the stories of your colleagues across the nation – show us why your work matters. You are truly our heroes.

The judging process is always incredibly difficult – this year's National Recipient and State Recipients were chosen from yet another large, deeply impressive group of nominations. Thank you to everyone who submitted a nomination, and the people who stepped up to serve on the judging panel: Joe Macbeth, Executive Director of the National Alliance of Direct Support



Barbara Merrill, Esq.

Professionals as well as Chumie Twerski and Janet Wilson, also of NADSP; and our ANCOR staff and consultants – Katherine Berland, Marie Campos, André Floyd, Doris Parfaite-Claude, and Diane McComb.

We are also very grateful to our Platinum Partner Relias Learning, who has generously underwritten the DSP Awards for the third year in a row. Relias, thank you!

Recognition of excellence is important – but we cannot - and will not - stop there! It's the mission of ANCOR's National Advocacy Campaign to obtain the resources necessary to

attract and retain professionals like this year's award recipients. All too often we hear about previous awardees – DSPs that personified the best of the best – that with great reluctance left for a better paying job, not a profession. Turnover rates across the country are unacceptably high.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of these dedicated professionals, join our campaign. Help ANCOR spread the word, help us to educate your state and federal elected officials that quality supports for people with disabilities require a stable, professional workforce!

Barbara Merrill, Esq., is CEO of ANCOR. She can be reached at bmerrill@ancor.org



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A N C O R S T A F F

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Honoring Our Best Direct Support Professionals

By Angela King
ANCOR President



Angela King

I begin my career as a Direct Support Professional, working in the state institution on the night shift, then as a recreation tech and later as a weekend group home staff member. That experience gave me the passion for this profession, the insight I needed to understand the daily challenges of the work and an appreciation for the people who provide daily supports to individuals in community settings, in their homes, or in the vast number of places that DSPs go every day supporting folks to live fuller lives with meaningful choices.

I understood early on that the individuals living in that institution longed to participate in their communities. As a recreation tech, it was my responsibility to take people “out” to

Six Flags, movies, parks, and numerous other recreational activities. This was one of the most rewarding jobs I ever had, because the individuals were so excited to participate in these events, which were too few and too limited at that time.

Only by transitioning to community living did these individuals get to enjoy the life choices we take for granted every day. I applaud the work of each and every DSP being recognized from around the country.

Through ANCOR's National Advocacy Campaign (fondly known as the NAC), we are doing everything we can to shine a light on the critical work you do and sharing stories like the ones collected in the 2017 Recognizing Excellence magazine with Congress, Administrative Agencies, and the Executive Branch, so we can advocate for fair pay and benefits.

Once a year, ANCOR sponsors the “DSP of

the Year” awards, where we honor outstanding DSPs from coast to coast. Hundreds of nominations are submitted. The nominations are then de-identified and passed on to a group of people who have the very difficult job of narrowing the nominations to one award recipient per state and one national recipient.

The DSP of the Year awards ceremony is a joyous celebration where phenomenal stories are told and many deserving people are recognized.

Without you, individuals with disabilities would still be excluded from the public and denied their rights as citizens. Thank you for all you do to make dreams a reality, to make our communities more inclusive, and to ensure that each person you support has a full and meaningful life.

Angela King, ANCOR President and President and CEO of Volunteers of America Texas



**We salute
the 2017 DSPs
of the Year!**



ANCOR Foundation Awards Program

The ANCOR Foundation's awards program recognizes, validates and showcases excellence, leadership

and innovation that strengthens a national culture of communities of choice for people with disabilities. In so doing, the

ANCOR Foundation expresses both its gratitude and high esteem for the individuals, organizations and work accomplished, and

holds up as national role models of distinction the leaders and organizations upon whom it confers distinction.

Recognizing Excellence

ANCOR honors Clarence J. Sundram, JD, with the 2017 ANCOR Foundation President's Award:

The ANCOR Foundation President's Award recognizes individuals whose contributions

to the disability field uniquely led to leading practices and profound innovation. ANCOR recognizes

Mr. Sundram's lifelong leadership to institute reforms in abuse and neglect of persons with

disabilities and reforms in mental health services globally.

ANCOR congratulates the following 2017 Legacy Leaders

The ANCOR Foundation Legacy Leaders Circle celebrates the accomplishments of the men and women who have paved the way to life in community settings for people with disabilities. These visionary leaders have not only helped shape and guide ANCOR over the past 47 years but made meaningful inclusive

communities a reality for the countless Americans with disabilities.

The ANCOR Foundation Legacy Leaders Circle honors our finest and most influential leaders while creating and funding opportunities for the development of future leaders in our field.

The 2017 inductees into the Legacy Leaders Circle – introduced at the ANCOR

Conference: *Taking the Helm* – are:

Mark Davis
Daryn Demeritt
Judy Goodwin
Ann Moffitt

Bruce Nelson
Chris Sparks
Greg Wellems
Donna Werner

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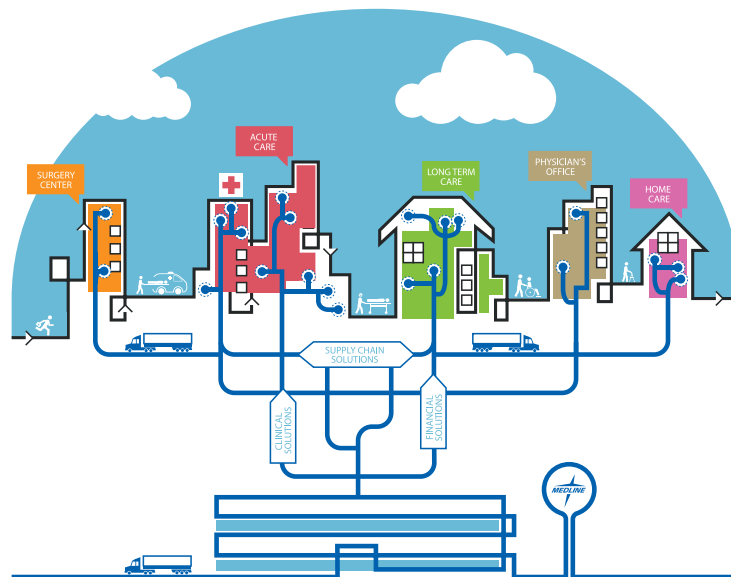
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Vernita Manning
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Debbie Cowan
*Sunrise
Community of
Polk County, Inc.
Florida*



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ANCOR'S 2017 NATIONAL DSP of the Year

Forrest Austin

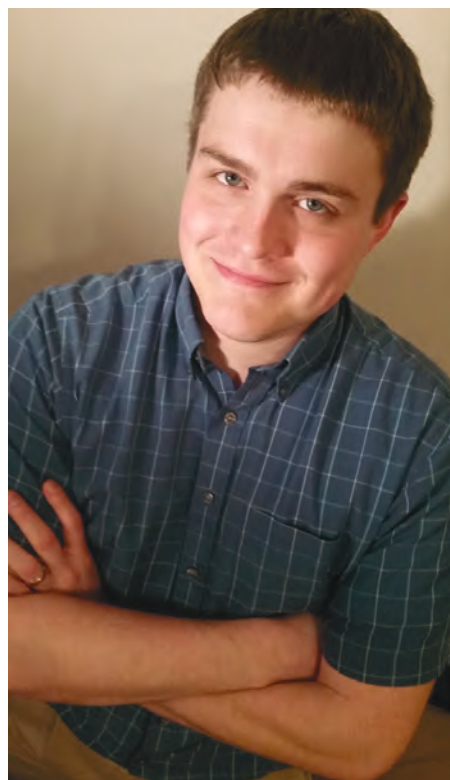
by Tom King

When Forrest Austin looks at someone with a disability, all he sees is a person. He never sees a disability. Just the person. His mantra is built around three traits – kindness, dignity, and respect. He is a Direct Support Professional (DSP) and Community Employment Job Coach at Johnson County Developmental Supports (JCDS) in Lenexa, KS.

Forrest has been a DSP for nine years – four years at JCDS -- and it is somewhat amazing that he has such a seasoned approach to his work along with a varied skillset when you find out that he's only 29 years old. That skillset and what he does with it is why he has been selected ANCOR's 2017 DSP of the Year. He will be honored during the 2017 ANCOR Conference May 1-3 at the Marriott River Center in San Antonio, TX.

How does he feel about this honor? "I've thought about this a lot and I know there are DSPs all across the country doing great things and it is all during a time of change for services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities," he said. "It is a great honor to be recognized in the midst of all this, and I see it as recognition not only for my personal contributions, but to the quality services provided here in the state of Kansas and in Johnson County."

Chad VonAhnen is the agency's Executive Director and a big fan of Forrest. "It is an enormous honor for Forrest and for our agency. One of the things that jumps out at me about Forrest is that he really does embody the team spirit that we look for here," he said. "We rely on DSPs and our staff to create solutions and figure out ways to provide opportunities for our people to be part of the community. Forrest does that every day. He's a great thinker



2017 DSP of the Year
Forrest Austin
of Johnson County
Developmental Supports

and a great doer. He keeps his focus on peoples' abilities and providing them with choice-driven supports and advocating alongside of them to live and work in the community."

To those comments VonAhnen added: "Regardless of his age, he has compassion and empathy and he works very effectively with people. It's rare that people can see the finish line, but he can. He always wants to know how do we improve systems and networks. He's always at a higher level in terms of his thinking."

Kim Perry is a Community Employment Team Leader at this agency that supports 495 people and is Forrest's supervisor. She will be in San Antonio with him for the ANCOR Conference. When you ask her about Forrest, she says: "He has a

tremendous work ethic. This sounds trite but it's not – he's the kind of person who goes way – and I mean way above – and beyond and I am not exaggerating here. He's a go-to person. He's someone who is always looking at innovative ways to do things and bringing those to the agency without being asked. He is always looking at the bigger picture."

Beth Johnson is the agency's Director of Day and Employment Services who nominated Forrest for this honor. Her take on Forrest says a lot about him. "He is just one of the most positive people I have ever met in my life. He always has a smile. He's incredibly energetic and he builds people up around him, and I'm talking about the people he supports and our staff. He's a very humble young man. But he's also respectful, persistent and patient. He just gets it done. He just gets it done every day."

During the week you can find him at the administrative offices of the Johnson County government supervising eight interns in the agency's Project Search program, a program near and dear to his heart. He helps prepare interns for Project Search and serves as their job coach. "I'm in training mode every hour of the day," he says.

Last year Kim reports that 8 of 11 interns found jobs and they have 16 interns in 2017 (so far) and two have already begun new jobs. In his three years with Project Search, 13 interns have been hired for full- or part-time jobs. "Project Search is a very rewarding program and you see growth and outcomes that no one thought possible," he says. "We have people get fulltime jobs for \$15 an hour who have an intellectual disability. You feel like you are breaking ground. I want that to become the rule and not the exception for our program."

And to that he quickly adds: "These are

people coming in who are serious about wanting to work and I feel so lucky to be helping them find and get that work. They have barriers ... I had breaks, a great life growing up, and some of them have not. I have so much respect for them. I can never truly understand their struggles, but I do respect their efforts every single day and want to be here supporting them."

He wears other hats at JCDS as well. He is the agency's certified trainer for CPR and First Aid classes, teaching staff and the Project Search interns these skills. Beth says his skillset revolves around his understanding that leadership is shared among all people at the agency, and it is encouraged. She says he is a talented job coach who develops and nurtures relationships with the client interns and the businesses and is "awesome" with technology.

In nominating Forrest, Beth, working with Kim, wrote this about him: "Forrest has advocated vigorously for increasing the level of inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who live and work in our community. He initiated a work group that focuses on what we can do to prepare our greater community to fully include people with disabilities. One of the recommendations of this group relates to increasing the education provided to businesses about people with disabilities and Forrest developed a PowerPoint presentation that is currently being used as the team meets with local businesses. This presentation serves to increase the comfort level of some employees and also dispels any misperceptions they may have about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Forrest also developed a presentation designed to encourage individuals being served in the sheltered workshop to consider community employment. He did a wonderful job of illustrating the positive aspects of employment and conducted multiple small group training sessions."

They talk about how he pushed for

the agency to begin using the Vocational Fit Assessment tool, which includes 120 questions that helps match a person to a potential job or a specific kind of work in Project Search. "There was some push-back but Forrest is persistent and kept at it and now it is being embraced within the agency and across our state," Beth says. This assessment tool began being used in November 2016, Forrest says. Creativity is one tool in a DSP's toolbox that is very important and often not appreciated. This is, Beth says, another of Forrest's strengths.

"Forrest strives for continuous improvement and he's eager to initiate programs and tools that have the potential to improve the services we provide and enhance the outcomes for the people we support," she said. "He often incorporates technology and has done a wonderful job assisting the interns with developing their own PowerPoint presentations they share with a variety of audiences. Each intern presents their portion of the presentation and the content is very powerful because it speaks to how similar we all are in terms of our hopes and dreams."

So, what makes this DSP of the Year tick, so to speak. Kim has a few thoughts about that. "He sees the bigger picture and he really wants to make a difference. He really gets it. He wants to make a difference in the trenches and he has great passion for people with disabilities and making their lives better. He is at the forefront of changing lives and he always sees the end game....and he won't stop until he gets there."

Forrest has worked at JCDS for four years, beginning in May 2013 in the agency's sheltered workshop and then became a float DSP at supported work sites. Two years ago he began working with Project Search. His first five years as a DSP were spent at Haven House, a small residential program where he cut his teeth as a DSP and director of day services. He

worked there while earning a B.S. degree in 2010 from the University of Kansas in Developmental Psychology.

His interest in this field revolved around family member and a friend. "My little brother is a year younger than me and he was diagnosed around age 7 with autism and today he's in grad school," Forrest says. "So I saw it at home. And in my freshman year in high school we had a guy with autism whose paraprofessional was with him. I was behind them in the lunch line one day and he was talking about a video game and she had no clue what he was talking about. I knew about the game, so we sat at the same table that day and I started talking with him and we became friends. I'd hang out with him in his resource room. Then we started going to an autism resource group. We still email and talk to this day."

Remember Haven House? The mother of this young man with autism ran Haven House and offered Forrest a job there.

Forrest is still playing video games to relax away from work, and he's also busy helping his fiancée plan their June wedding.

This young DSP genuinely loves his work and the people he works with and for at JCDS. So much so that he says it will be his career. "Yes, it's something I want to do for a very long time. It just fits who I am," he said. "I'm very big on this field and to a young person considering this field, I will tell them that you are working with people, not with disabilities. When I look at a person I support, I see a person and not a disability. Just the person. It's all about the person. They deserve the same kindness, dignity and respect that any other person deserves."

Tom King is a free-lance writer, living in Knoxville, TN. You can reach him at 865-659-3562 or via email at tking535@gmail.com

2017 Direct Support Professional of the Year

STATE RECIPIENTS



Vernita Manning

ALABAMA
VERNITA MANNING
*Resources for
Independence
Cottondale, AL*

Ms. Manning's own words about her role as a DSP help explain why she is being honored: "I believe God is utilizing my hands,

mouth, touch and smile to make the world a better place for the individuals I serve on a daily basis." She is given high marks and praise in the key areas of advocacy, relationships, and creativity. She has been supporting clients for 17 years and a DSP for five years at the agency's 39th Street CRF Home.

At their monthly People First Meetings, Ms. Manning is instrumental in making sure her clients' voices are heard with dignity and respect. She makes certain the individuals understand what they heard. As she says: "It's all about the individuals." She is considered family by the families of those she supports. Loretta Paige nominated her for this honor and says of her, "Ms. Manning uses her positive attitude and exciting imagination to heighten the individuals' expression and awareness of their environment. Her creative expression helps the individual tap into their creativity, which empowers him or her to look beyond their disability."

She is all about that very important NADSP Tenet: Advocacy. Ms. Manning worked in a state facility for 12 years. When it closed several individuals were placed at 39th CRF and she followed them there. She was at all of their Person Centered Plan meetings and had the background knowledge to bridge the gaps of any uncertainties identified in the meetings. She gets her clients into the community, arranges doctor's appointments, goes shopping with them and even worked tirelessly to find the church one individual attended when she was a child.

Ms. Paige calls her helpful and caring, saying that guardians and family members respect her opinions about their loved ones. She is flexible, working in different homes and "never says no to a Residential Program Director when he or she asks her to work different shifts," Paige says.

ALASKA
DEBBIE OGDEN
*ResCare
Fairbanks, AK*



Debbie Ogden

Recognizing the needs of those she supports and advocating and following through on those needs are strengths that any DSP needs to have

— and Debbie Ogden, Alaska's DSP of the Year, has those strengths and many more. She supported a frail, elderly gentleman for approximately a year before he transitioned into assisted living. Ms. Ogden spent time getting to really know him -- his interests, hobbies, and his friends. It was vitally important to him that he stay connected and socialize with his friends. So she stepped in and made arrangements to take him twice a week to a coffee shop in Fairbanks to be with them. This man has trouble seeing and she would even cut his food in bite-sized pieces so he could clean his plate and stay healthy.

She is also on top of the NADSP Tenet of Promoting Physical and Emotional Well-Being. She began having trouble safely helping this man transfer and she let the staff know of her concerns. The staff spoke to the consumer's guardian, who then told her father's doctor about the issue. The doctor wrote orders for him to get a gait belt and now each direct care staff on the consumer's team is trained how to safely assist him using the gait belt. This man's daughter wrote this about her: "Debbie has been caring for my father for two years. If it wasn't for her care and commitment my father would not have been able to remain in his home. This isn't just a job to her -- she truly cares."

A DSP at ResCare for only three years, she was selected to travel to Alaska's capital, Juneau, with AgeNet (an association that advocates for senior services). There she met with state legislators and shared her personal experiences of working with seniors, specifically how the care she provides impacts their lives in a positive way and allows them to remain safely in their homes. AgeNet's advocacy efforts positively impacted the legislative process and grant funding was not cut from the senior grants this past session. That's real advocacy at work!



Ejay Bustamante

ARIZONA
EJAY BUSTAMANTE
Mosaic in Arizona
Avondale, AZ

Meet Ejay Bustamante, a DSP of 26 years who has been with Mosaic for 12 years. Meet this man who is Arizona's DSP of the Year.

He's all about being an advocate for "his boys" and weaving in creativity and person-centered supports into his home-based support plans. Three men live with Ejay and they all keep one another busy and active. He was nominated by Traci Gruenberger, Executive Director at Mosaic in Arizona, and she writes about one man Ejay supports "whose family often tries to impose their wishes upon him.

With Ejay's encouragement and support, he is finding his voice and starting to assert his right to make his own decisions even when his family disagrees." Ejay discovered that this man can express himself very well through text messages. "Recently, with Ejay's encouragement, this man provided interview questions for candidates for an open agency position. These questions were deep, thoughtful questions that brought a different perspective and those on the interview panel were blown away by the depth of the questions he presented," Traci wrote.

Ejay makes sure that the men are active in the day programs with their friends. He calls them "his boys" and they are active in the community. A few years ago Ejay bought an RV so that he and the boys could travel in comfort and at the same time ensure that their needs were met and their dignity maintained. Recently, Ejay purchased a new RV and took two of those he supports to Graceland in Memphis, TN to fulfill a life-long dream for one of the men. This gentleman has been talking about that trip ever since. They're now planning a trip to Las Vegas, a personal favorite of all of them.

"Ejay recently mentioned that one of his boys could benefit from having a laptop and he knew that the laptop would expand his world," she says. A generous donation paid for the laptop and this man became so excited and immediately looked up Clint Eastwood and John Wayne without any assistance. "Prior to this, no one knew that he knew how to do searches on the computer!," she wrote. Ejay made it happen!

ARKANSAS
JOSEPH CUEVAS
Bost Inc.
Clarksville, AR



Joseph Cuevas

"Joe Cuevas has taught his daughters and the community that people with disabilities are as important as those without struggles. Through his example, he has helped others understand that people with physical and developmental disabilities should be treated with respect and dignity just like everyone else."

What better words could be said or written about a DSP? Sherry Tenango, a Coordinator at Bost Inc., wrote those words about Joe in nominating him as the Arkansas DSP of the Year. And to that she added: "Through the years people with disabilities have been hidden, abused, ignored, and prejudged. Due to advocates like Joe Cuevas, people's ideas have radically changed to inclusion and normalization."

His work is wrapped around a young man given up by his mother. He is now part of Joe's family in their home. He was on the verge of being institutionalized, had daily negative behavioral issues, was withdrawn and avoided people. He did not know how to show or receive affection. He was low functioning and had very limited verbal or safety skills. Today, eight years later, he is a very different young man. Joe volunteered to be his aide in school every day. He now says "I love you" and gives hugs and knows he has a family. He also graduated from high school. And read what Sherry writes next: "Joe's persistence over the past 8 years has also enabled him to develop and maintain a relationship with his mother."

Here is what his mother says: "Since living with Joe my son has flourished in so many ways. It's like watching a flower bloom. Because of Joe my son graduated from high school and that would not have happened if not for Joe. Joe has given me such peace knowing my son is safe and happy."

This DSP, Sherry says, has tailored his life around this young man and his needs. He is part of Joe's family unit and accompanies them on family events -- trick or treating, car shows, going to Bass Pro, and even vacationing. Joe has guided him to integrate into their community, form relationships, achieve goals, decrease negative behaviors, and maintain his health and safety...and successfully interact with others. "If Joe had not decided to become a DSP, this young man would have been institutionalized and forgotten. To be DSP of the Year you have to show great commitment to the person you serve. I can't think of anyone who is more deserving of this honor than Joe," Sherry said.



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Debbie Ogden
Alaska



Amanda Meeks-Sinner
California



Adam Candeloro
Canada



Tamika Norwood
Georgia



Rose Harrison
Louisiana



Ricky Hamm
North Carolina



Vonda Dotson
South Carolina



Chasidy Williams
Texas



Chris Thompson
West Virginia



Amanda Meeks-Sinner

CALIFORNIA
AMANDA MEEKS-SINNER
ResCare
CLOVIS, CA

Mandy, as those at ResCare in Clovis know her, helped support her mother, who had Alzheimer's, for several years. She was in a facility and Mandy

and her father stepped in, when others would not, to be sure she received the proper care. She said a tray of food was left with her mother, with no help to cut it up. She and her father would visit daily to help her mother eat. Then they would move on to help other residents do the same. On holidays, Mandy and her Dad would make a turkey, stuffing, and all of the fixings to make sure the residents had a decent holiday meal. Based on the experiences that her mother had, Mandy has continued to be a caregiver for the past 17 years.

That experience, plus nine years as a flight attendant with a major airline, taught her much about customer service that is part of her DSP toolbox. Mandy is now the DSP of the Year in California and she continues to offer wonderful supports. She convinced a man she supports to put aside his fears and be part of an "Honor Air" flight to see the war memorials in Washington, D.C. He was a bomber pilot in World War II. Mandy helped her client's son with the paperwork and made it happen. He loved it, too.

Another man she supports recently moved into a new facility and was not doing his range-of-motion exercises as he did them at his home. In stepped Mandy. She suggested they go to the facility's gym and use a machine together to work his arms. He enjoyed the machines at the gym, so Mandy visits once a week so that he will continue his exercises. She also helped him decorate his new room and made suggestions about where to hang his family pictures.

She was honored as the agency's Caregiver of the Month in both November 2015 and in October 2016. She has participated in every quarterly training offered and uses her skills and abilities to impact her clients in a positive way. She treats everyone with kindness and respect.

CANADA
ADAM CANDELORO
ResCare
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario

He is all about community, creativity, celebrating success and going above and beyond when necessary. Adam has been working in the profession for six years and has been selected

as the DSP of the Year in Canada. When you read his nomination, you also realize that consistency is a major factor with his supports. He works both in a residential setting as well as with Outreach/Supported-Independent-Living participants. Particularly with his Outreach participants, he assists with integrating them within the community, speaking to community members as needed on behalf of the participants, and by providing his clients with feedback and ideas on how to self-advocate.

Here are three examples that highlight his skill set:

1. He takes an individual to church weekly and helps in the communications between the participant and other congregation members. This man has become an active member of the congregation. Congregation members sought out Adam's supervisor to commend him on his professionalism, his ability to represent the participant, and his ability to help the participant be part of the congregation.
2. He's big on utilizing humor and leisure/recreation activities as part of a rehabilitation program. One person he supports enjoys cards and board games. Adam tapped into that and these games have helped with his cognitive abilities. Adam uses quotes from a favorite TV show to provide cueing and encouragement during difficult tasks and teaches his clients how to use humor.
3. Adam was part of a small group of staff helping a client re-enter the workforce. He attended training with the participant, assisted him with learning his job tasks and also with socializing and integrating with the other employees. Adam often had to adjust his work hours, begin early, stay late....which he did with usual enthusiasm.

It's not surprising that the people he supports often ask Adam to accompany them on special outings, such as concerts, and they all say he does a great job of supporting them in these unique environments. They think of him more like a friend who is helping them than a staff member. High praise indeed!



Adam Candeloro



Brodie Shultze

COLORADO
BRODIE SHULZE
Imagine!
Longmont, CO

In just 2½ years Brodie Shultze has made quite an impact at Imagine! And in more ways than one... or two...or even three. He helped two clients with

limited physical coordination become far more efficient at their job site by reaching out to university students to develop a simple assistive technology device to help them. It worked. One man loves to run in “fun runs” with veterans who are his friends. But he needs a cane for walking or running. Again, Brodie reached out to a local university’s engineering school to create an adaptive device to help him maintain his balance while running. It is similar to a walker, but with a wider frame to accommodate a running stride.

Game Day at Imagine! is always a highlight. However, even in an environment designed to be extremely accessible, some participants can feel left out. That was the case with the game ‘Operation’. Some found it hard and those in wheelchairs could not get close enough to the table. Brodie to the rescue! “For our agency’s Halloween party, he built a life-sized Dracula-themed Operation game, large enough to be accessible for those in wheelchairs and to accommodate those with limited motor skills,” says Fred Hobbs in his letter of nomination. “Using a refrigerator-sized box, MaKey MaKey software (which turns everyday objects into touchpads), SoundPlant (which turns a computer keyboard into a sound trigger and playable instrument), a pair of salad tongs, and his own art skills, Brodie made it possible for everyone interested to play!”

But this professional, now honored as Colorado’s DSP of the Year, is all about that important NADSP Tenet: Respect. Imagine! often hosts volunteers from local middle and high schools. The students can be nervous and unsure when interacting with people with intellectual disabilities. Hobbs tells us what happened next: “Recognizing this risk, Brodie created an orientation, including disability etiquette, for our volunteers so they could get the best experience out of the program. Creating an understanding among our youth of the many amazing qualities the people we serve have opens the door to a culture of inclusivity and respect, and Brodie is taking steps to ensure that happens right here in our community.”

CONNECTICUT
ANGELA PAGE
Mosaic
Oakdale, CT



Angela Page

Angela Page has been a DSP for 26 years at the same agency. This year she was nominated to be Connecticut’s DSP of the Year by Mosaic’s Rachel Rathbun and when you read her letter of nomination you quickly understand why she was selected.

Angela provides supports for a woman who is called “a very complicated young lady.” Angela helped her adjust to a new home environment, overcome new challenges and lessen her increased emotional outbursts. It was a difficult transition. After a three-month hospital stay, she had to move into a new group home. She went from being healthy and independently mobile to never being able to walk again in an instant. Angela entered her life, took the time to get to know her and made her feel welcome.

The most important person in this woman’s life is her mother, who lives an hour away from her new home. Angela calls her Mom and sister to give them updates and makes sure they get to see her often. Angela comes in early and stays late on many days to pick up her mother and take them to appointments together, out to lunch, and visits to the home. Here is what the woman’s mother wrote about Angela: “She is a kind and thoughtful worker. One creation from Angela is a monthly greeting card from my daughter, designed and made by Angela, in addition to family birthday cards. We find all of this a sweet, gentle reminder of us as a continuing family unit throughout the year.”

To help with the woman’s self-injurious behaviors that have plagued her most of her life, Angela found pink padded sparring gloves that have prevented self-inflicted head injuries and hand mutilations. “By taking the time to get to know her likes, dislikes, communication meaning, as well as mental and physical abilities, Angela has helped her to become a more independent, understood, healthier and happier individual today,” Rachel says.

**Congratulations to
Joseph Cuevas
of**



**for being named
Arkansas DSP of the Year!**



**Joseph exemplifies the mission of Bost,
to empower individuals with disabilities
to achieve greater independence through
his dedication and care. We at Bost are
SO proud of Joseph!**



Congratulations Brodie Schulze!

**2017 ANCOR Direct Support Professional
of the Year for Colorado**



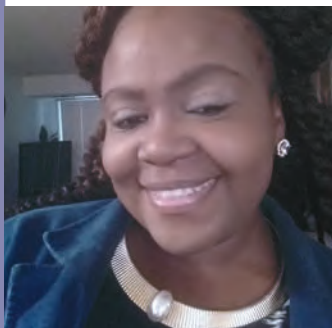
www.imaginecolorado.org

Congratulations Xia Xiong!

**Innovative Services is proud to have you on our
team, and we're excited ANCOR selected you as
the Wisconsin DSP of the year! Your willingness to
give of yourself with a positive attitude makes life
better every day for your clients and their families.
Thank you for seeing the possibilities in others!**



**INNOVATIVE
SERVICES, INC.**



Juslyne Fleurantus

DELAWARE
Juslyne Fleurantus
 Mosaic
 New Castle, DE

Katherine Thomas calls her “an incredible leader” and says that “integrity, honor and respect are just a few important characteristics that Juslyne has

demonstrated throughout her professional career as a Direct Support Professional. Juslyne is someone who leads by example and someone who achieves goals.”

All of that and more is why Juslyne has been selected as the Delaware DSP of the Year. She has worked at Mosaic for 8 1/2 years and been a DSP for 13 years.

Ms. Thomas nominated her and in her letter of nomination she tells us more about Juslyne: “She is someone who leads by example and someone who achieves goals. Juslyne became an instructor to teach individuals and other DSPs about the importance of respect, dignity, and safety. Juslyne met with individuals served and their support staff to explain how building positive relationships inspires others to be the best that they can be and do what is right while providing supports to individuals.”

She has helped some of those she supports learn how to vote, to become a member of a church and learn to read. Juslyne organized events within the community and provided connections to advocacy groups, local church members, state representatives and other resources. As a result of these efforts, Juslyne made it possible for the individuals to build relationships and establish social roles with local organizations across the state of Delaware.

One woman she supports had always dreamed about finding her brother. In steps Juslyne. She talked with her former support providers and friends. She found her brother and Juslyne found another brother and her aunt as well. When several individuals told her that they didn’t have enough money to attend the Disability Ball in Wilmington, she stepped in again and started a fundraising event with the individuals. She raised hundreds of dollars for 10 individuals to attend the Disability Ball.

She is a special DSP doing special things for those she supports!



Michael Washington

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MICHAEL WASHINGTON
 RCM
 Washington, D.C.

Michael has been a DSP at RCM of D.C. for seven years and it’s pretty clear what he’s all about – relationships and building confidence. He builds relationships with those he supports, with their families and with the community. That’s why Diana Hernandez at RCM nominated him to be the DSP of the Year for Washington, D.C., and that’s why he was ultimately selected for this major recognition.

A woman he supports wanted a certain hairstyle, which her family did not like. He respectfully explained to the family that this was her choice and she should be able to wear her hair how she wanted. He listened to her when she said she loved her family and church. With his support, she’s at church every Sunday worshipping with her mother and sister and is now singing in the church choir.

This woman he supports suffered a stroke before Michael started working with her. It left her unable to walk and communicate effectively. Things are different these days. He has patiently worked with her to stand and with the help of a walker, she is now taking steps and getting around, even walking up the steps to her mother’s house during a recent visit.

In her nomination letter, Diana describes how he did all of this: “They started with her first standing up independently. Then she would walk from the bathroom to the living room. Next she walked from the house to the van. They continued with these small steps and each time she would go a little further than before. Mr. Washington often used humor with her to ensure that even though she was working on a challenging goal, he made it enjoyable. He constantly reminds her of her accomplishments and is cheering her on every step of the way. This has led her to become more successful with her goal each and every day.”

Congratulations



Debbie Cowan

FLORIDA
DEBBIE COWAN
*Sunrise Community of
Central Florida
Lakeland, FL*

Advocating for those you support and helping them become self-advocates are big parts of the work of a DSP. So are identifying the needs of those who you support. That explains why Debbie is the Florida DSP of the Year, who has worked as a Sunrise DSP for 11 years.

She is an advocate for the agency's Aktion Club and leads her team to self advocacy by hosting the monthly governance meeting, allowing individuals to express themselves and voice their needs and concerns. Debbie encourages her team to speak out on issues about which they feel strongly.

Heather Davis, who nominated Debbie, says that she is very active and involved with the Kiwanis Club, which sponsors the Aktion Club. "Debbie promotes community involvement by ensuring that her team participates in community inclusion opportunities as they arise. Her involvement in the community has left a lasting impact," Heather says. "She promotes activities such as Stuff the Bus, Salvation Army Bell Ringers, canned food drives for local shelters and Adopt an Angel."

She helped the Program Coordinator develop programs for the individuals. She came up with the idea for the "seeing abilities" programs vs. simply disability programs. She has implemented career-based skills with clients and as a result two clients were able to obtain jobs within the organization as paid employees. Debbie also assisted a client to understand his own bank account.

"There are not enough words to explain how Debbie has impacted the individuals she serves," Heather said. "The most recognizable accomplishment has been that clients are expressing themselves freely! Even an individual who avoids eye contact has started making eye contact and not only making eye contact but interacting with her peers."

GEORGIA
TAMIKA NORWOOD
*ResCare
Macon, GA*



Tamika Norwood

Tamika has been a direct support staff, a home manager and is now a host home provider. Through the years advocacy has been one of her hallmarks. She's advocated with the local school system to ensure that children in her care received appropriate education, no matter the disability or level of behavioral support required. She has worked with doctors to make sure that required documentation for individuals in her care is completed in a timely manner and without an extra fee. Tamika has actively participated in advocating for more IDD waivers for the state of Georgia, increases in the waiver amounts for Medicaid waivers, as well as matters surrounding inclusion.

She's also been very effective when working with family members of those she supports. All of this leads up to Tamika being selected as Georgia's DSP of the Year for 2017.

When Tamika became a host provider, the relationship between one woman and her natural parents was strained and unsafe. Tamika worked with the Division of Family and Children Services to help the natural family learn the skills to foster a safe, clean and healthy home environment. The woman is now able to visit with her family on weekends and holidays without the support of any governmental agencies. Tamika wanted to make sure that her natural family was prepared to care for her during visits. Tamika sacrificed and stayed at the home of the natural family for several days, providing tools to ensure that the home visits would be safe and enjoyable.

In 2005, Tamika began supporting a 10-year-old girl with autism and a seizure disorder who needed a temporary placement because she could no longer live with her mother. There was temporary funding, but the placement became long term. With no payment, Tamika refused to turn her back on the child. Eleven years later, Tamika continues to provide supports for this now 21-year-old thriving young woman.

to all DSPs!



Jason Pasley

ILLINOIS
JASON PASLEY
*Marcfirst
Normal, IL*

Jason is a DSP of many talents and skills. He has a way with those he supports in the Marcfirst day program. He is effective at

empowering each person to express how they feel and voice their opinions. One of his clients explains: "He's good at talking us through being angry and our feelings." And then Jason goes above and beyond. This year he supported the decision to register his clients to vote. He made the connections to organize voter registration at an Advocacy Conference for the whole state, where three of his clients registered more than 25 people to vote.

For this and more, Jason has been selected as the Illinois DSP of the Year. He has been a DSP for 16 ½ years – all at Marcfirst..

He uses consistency, respect and justice to build relationships. Every day his home-room activities begin with everyone both asking and answering questions. He supports communication in all forms and has the patience and understanding to guide the discussion so that each person's voice is heard, whether verbal or not. When an art program became available for people he supported to earn income from what they created, Jason took the project on. He endlessly researched projects and investigated the interest of the artists. When they had an idea about what they would like to create, he brought together options and supported them to complete each part of the project on their own. From sculpture to painting, collage to drawing, no medium is too daunting, no task unattainable.

Jason sees each person as a person, one who should have responsibilities and be aware of all the issues that affect their lives. He realizes that not everyone has access to the information needed to make informed decisions, and so he makes it his goal to give people all the information they need to make their own decisions.

Among many accomplishments big and small over the years, Jason recently raised nearly \$11,000 for a mentoring program in his community, becoming the Central Illinois Champion of the Year.



Donna Kite

INDIANA
DONNA KITE
*Cardinal Services, Inc.
of Indiana
Royal Center, IN*

Twin boys were born 31 years ago and since they were 8 weeks old, Donna Kite has been supporting both boys.

She has been a Direct Support Professional for 31 years. "I can't say at that time that she knew this would be something she would spend her life doing and loving. Donna is still involved in their everyday lives. She has done nothing but teach and advocate with them since the beginning," says Karrie Smith of Cardinal Services, who nominated Donna for the DSP of the Year award for Indiana.

The mother of these boys writes about this dedicated DSP: "She has been our support in good times and bad and has offered unwavering loyalty and care as they have grown and matured. She has been able to find humor in situations we have encountered over the years and has been able to always find the good side in everything.

The boys – now young men, of course -- have Fragile-X with Autism. One is non-verbal. "As I think back over the years I cannot begin to appreciate how much she has meant to us," their mother writes about Donna. "She has worked tirelessly to make sure they meet their goals and is a wonderful teacher and caregiver.

Donna has helped staff, doctors, and nurses work effectively with them through the years. People in Royal Center know them. She gets them into the community, even visiting hospitals and nursing homes when someone they know is ill. "Donna and the guys are always on the go," Karrie says. She likens them to the theme song from the TV show "Cheers": "You want to go where everybody knows your name." They take walks around their small town, have lunch in their favorite restaurant or in a friend's home.

She helped one of them find a church job and he's still working and drawing a paycheck eight years later. "Donna has been a constant and steady anchor in our household over the past 31 years," their mother writes.



Jeanne Baughman

IOWA
JEANNE BAUGHMAN
Mainstream Living
Ames, Iowa

Jeanne, a DSP for only five years, all with Mainstream Living, supports a young woman who made a major decision in her mid-20s to move out of her mother's home

and become independent. Since moving out, she has worked with Jeanne exclusively and become more independent, recently starting college and getting a Pell Grant.

She told Jeanne that she didn't like her primary care doctor, but that she could not do anything about it. "Jeanne helped her understand that she had a choice in her physician. Jeanne helped her research physicians in the community and she was able to eventually find a doctor that she could communicate with effectively and build a relationship with to help improve her health," writes Amber Corrieri, Mainstream's Director of Communications, in her letter nominating Jeanne for the DSP of the Year award for Iowa.

Leaving her mother has been challenging for both of them, but Jeanne has coached her to build a more traditional relationship with her mother, one that allows her to make choices for herself.

This young woman wrote a letter supporting Jeanne's nomination and in it she wrote, in part: "Jeanne has been a steady presence, like family. I am not afraid to go into the community or be on my own any more. I was incredibly anxious about going into the community at first. Now I can go alone. When she was hurt and could not work a couple months ago, I missed her but felt like I would be fine. If I were graduating from college or from some other program, I would grab her and have her take a picture with me!" Jeanne also helped her learn how to navigate public transportation so that she could attend classes on her own.

Ms. Corrieri says Jeanne teaches other Mainstream clients to be strong self advocates. "She does this through role modeling, meaningful communication, and empowering individuals to make their own choices," she writes of Jeanne. "Rather than just helping someone accomplish a task or goal, Jeanne serves as a teacher. She encourages independent thought, while providing insight and advice."



the power behind your super powers.

We'd like to say **THANK YOU** to all
DSPs for being everyday **HEROES**.
footholdtechnology.com





congratulates

**Rick
Maclin**

on being named Missouri's
Direct Support Professional
of the Year



Congratulations!

Easterseals Midwest is very proud of Rick's level
of commitment and standard of excellence he
provides to the people we support.



Adam Thomas Marchant

KANSAS
ADAM THOMAS
MARCHANT
 Mosaic
 Garden City, KS

Adam Thomas Marchant is known as Tom by everyone at Mosaic. He's also known for making connections, solving problems and being

a wonderful advocate. He's also big on self-advocacy. He's made quite an impression at Mosaic. After only a year there, he was nominated for and is now the Kansas DSP of the Year.

Two men he supports have become very active in the Self Advocacy Coalition of Kansas -- or SACK. They were selected to be on the SACK leadership team and are now members of the Kansas University Self- Advocate Assessment Development Consultation Group.

Tom recommended that the agency become part of a local Rotary club, which led to jobs for 10 people the agency supports. He helped one man get a job at Papa John's Pizza and Tom was his job coach. He's been working for two months and loves his job. Tom worked with the manager to accommodate this man, who can work for only short periods of time. The man works an hour a day, five days a week, and that's huge for this man. "This gives him the extra spending money he wants, the pride of working in the community, and gets off work in time to attend bingo," said Vickie Harshbarger in nominating Tom.

Tom actually saved another man's job at a Walmart, who was let go after 20 years. Why, Tom thought? And he found out. The man struggled with working nights. Walmart schedules work via a computer and the computer had no way of knowing this man's needs. Tom worked with the Human Resources department and was able to get them to take him back and let him work during the day. He's not missed a day of work since!

KENTUCKY
Betsy Byrnes
 Kaleidoscope, Inc.
 Louisville, KY



Betsy Byrnes

Betsy is a DSP with 16 years of experience who supports the agency's most medically complex and fragile individuals. Most are non-verbal. She is described as a DSP "who creates an environment of warmth." If any of clients are hospitalized, you can count on her to visit with them after her workday is done. One man she supported always kissed everyone and when he was in the hospital, Betsy brought a bowl of Hershey Kisses and put them in his room with a sign that read: "Take a kiss until I am strong enough to give you one myself." His parents said that she helped "rally him to live." She has taught countless hospital staff how to better communicate with the agency's clients and advocates for IDD-specific training for the hospital's staff. Stephen Kristian at Kaleidoscope wrote in his letter of nomination: "She is able to bring to light the humanity of all."

These are but a sampling of why she was selected as the Kentucky DSP of the Year.

She recently organized a baseball game and helped her clients hold a bat and hit the ball. She cheered for them as she pushed them around the bases and they were smiling from ear to ear. Her spirit is contagious. Betsy also organized a week-long Kentucky State Fair activity during which the clients created artwork, made food and performed skits for the judges and competed for ribbons.

One man she supported was a cowboy and she discovered that he would comfort anyone who was afraid and hug them. When she first met him he asked her if she would come to his funeral. He was very concerned he would die and be forgotten. "When he passed away Betsy raised money and made sure that he had a headstone with a cowboy hat and that peers and friends attended his services," Kristian writes.

*As we celebrate the accomplishments of these
 dedicated professionals, join our campaign.*

*Help us spread the word, help us to educate your state and
 federal elected officials that quality supports for people with disabilities
 require a stable, professional workforce!*



Rose Harrison

LOUISIANA
ROSE HARRISON
ResCare
Opelousas, LA

She's known as "Mrs. Rose" and she is a DSP who draws rave reviews

from the people whose lives she touches, from their family members and from co-workers. Phrases such as "she is a joy" and "she inspires and uplifts people" are commonplace. One client she supports calls her "a whiz when it comes to her work." This whiz, who is a spry 72-year-old, has been honored as DSP of the Year in Louisiana. As one ResCare employee said: "You can't have a bad day when you are in her company!"

In addition to her DSP work, she helps feed and clothe the homeless in her community. Mrs. Rose organizes canned good drives to give to the homeless and elderly and some of the elderly are ResCare clients. She prepares plate lunches and distributes them to the homeless. When off duty, Mrs. Rose often visits a nursing home where a previous ResCare client lives. The daughter of this client called the office to let them know that Rose "is a joy to her mother and they appreciate the fact that Rose visits her mother at the nursing home."

Here is a story that's vintage Mrs. Rose. The agency supports a woman who would never leave her home. She refused to go out with DSPs to run errands and always wanted the DSP to run those errands without her. ResCare searched for a DSP who would work with this woman to get her out of the house. They thought of Mrs. Rose. "One day, to our surprise, Mrs. Rose came to the office and accompanying her was this client. The client was smiling and talking to us and thanking us for sending Rose to work for her," the agency writes in its letter of nomination. "She spreads happiness wherever she goes."



Wende Tyler

MAINE
WENDE TYLER
OHI
Bangor, ME

Jassen Bailey, a Team Coordinator at OHI who spent many years as a DSP, nominated Wende for the honor

of being Maine's DSP of the Year and this quote by Jassen speaks volumes about her work: "Wende is the most ethical DSP I've worked with in 24 years. She's in my Top 5 fantasy picks of all time. She constantly explains, advocates and brainstorms ideas for accomplishing person-centered supports to anyone who demonstrates less than 100% commitment to the process. She never ignores the challenges some people present when trying to support them."

Using her person-specific approach, she became a staunch advocate in helping a transgendered person finally feel comfortable in her own skin when she wasn't comfortable in the body she was born. She now wears what she loves most – dresses, women's clothing and hairstyles – in the community instead of only in her apartment. Wende encouraged her to find a new church that accepted her for who she is and suggested she find a Women's Group to attend. Wende helped her talk to her boss to ensure she would still have a job when she wore dresses to work and also accompanied her to talk to anyone the woman felt needed to know about her transformation -- even other DSPs.

Stepping outside of her comfort zone, Jassen shares, Wende began working with a man with a long history of intense medical issues and violent behavior. His occasional refusal to eat for long periods of time causes him to become violently ill and ultimately hospitalized for weeks. He's been in front of judges for assaulting housemates. Numerous times a year, he assaults staff and housemates. "Wende repeatedly educated him on the importance of preventative health and other medical appointments, explaining how they improve his quality of life in a way that connected with him," Jassen says. "She worked with him to develop positive ways to cope with his anger. As a result, it's been more than a year since he's either been hospitalized or assaulted anyone. He's able to independently recognize warning signs of his escalating anger and self-initiate actions to positively cope."



William Lewis

MARYLAND
WILLIAM LEWIS
New Horizons
Hyattsville, MD

One man at New Horizons is autistic and for years dreamed of becoming an

Ambassador at the Smithsonian Institution. Bill Lewis made it happen!

Seven of the agency's clients were said to be "difficult to employ" due to the severity of their disabilities. Bill developed a video about the seven and sent it to several community employers. One was so impressed he hired all seven. Bill Lewis made it happen!

Bill has been at New Horizons for four years now and the agency's Cynthia Smith-King nominated him to be the Maryland DSP of the Year – and he has been so honored. The two examples above explain a little about why she nominated him. There are other examples, but let's focus on these two as she tells us "the rest of the story."

The Smithsonian story: "Bill spent countless hours learning about this man's particular type of disability, and he used this knowledge to develop a workshop about him that he presented to the Smithsonian staff," she explained. "According to his supervisor, he has blossomed at the Smithsonian, and his rapport with the Museum's visitors and staff is amazing!!" And he was recently featured on a local TV station for his work.

The Seven: "Bill spent a lot of time coaching the individuals on interviewing skills, and when he felt they were ready, he reached out to numerous employers on their behalf, with no success. Then he had the idea about the video," Ms. Smith-King says. "Bill was convinced that once an employer had the opportunity to meet them they would realize their potential. Bill sent copies of this video to several community employers and one employer was so impressed that he granted all seven of the individuals an interview and hired all of them on the spot!!! Thanks to Bill's person-centered support these individuals have certainly beat the odds."



Dawn Gardner

MASSACHUSETTS
DAWN GARDNER
WCI
Waltham, MA

A woman supported by this DSP of 20 years loves The Beatles and their music and has dreamed about

seeing them in person for many years. Last July the lead singer of The Beatles, Sir Paul McCartney, was having a concert at Boston's Fenway Park. Dawn worked with her brother and they found the tickets and took her to the concert. But the real treat Dawn arranged was after the music stopped. Dawn took her backstage and she met and ate dinner with Paul and his band.

Nancy Silver Hargreaves, WCI's Chief Executive Officer, nominated Dawn for the DSP of the Year award and tells us how some of the women Dawn supports are very interested in witchcraft and the sites in Salem. Dawn has arranged many visits to these sites for the ladies. The women also are in competition with their neighbors, who try to outdo one another with Halloween decorations. Another of her clients had a dream about going to Alaska on vacation. Dawn helped her plan the trip, establish a budget, and that dream came true as well.

Ms. Hargreaves shares another Dawn story with us: "Dawn assisted a woman with acquired brain injury who is from Nigeria to be involved in her culture. She is experiencing Nigerian music and has been introduced to wearing Dashikis, the traditional African clothing. She now also goes to an African hair salon and experiences African cuisine in restaurants in the Boston area."

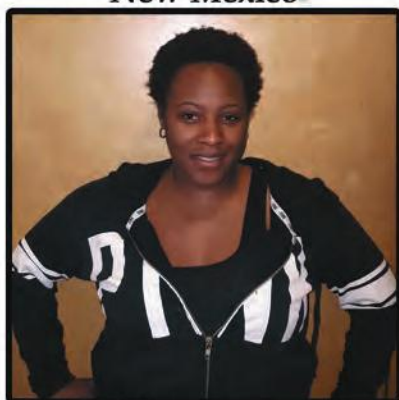
She describes Dawn as "the epitome of advocacy and self determination." Dawn is involved in the Self-Advocacy group and assists in facilitating the meetings with the individuals. She determines some of the agenda items with the individuals and helps define what activities are implemented and discussed regarding the items, such as holidays, nutrition, and voting. "She teaches the individuals about self-determination, decision making and identifying their own interests and dreams, such as where they want to go on vacation and activities of their choice," she added.



Kofi Dom
New Jersey



Guadalupe Leon
New Mexico



Nikiea Pankey
Oregon



Dawn Neddenriep
Nevada

Celebrating Our Outstanding DSP of the Year Winners!



WWW.**Dungarvin**.COM



Carolyn Stanford
Oklahoma



Thomas Housewright
Minnesota



Pam Ngum
Ohio

Your dedication to
respecting and
responding to the
choices of people in
need of supports
makes us proud
you're on our team!

MINNESOTA
THOMAS HOUSEWRIGHT
Dungarvin
Mendota Heights, MN



Thomas Housewright

Tom is in his third year as a Dungarvin DSP and knows that services begin and end with those he supports. “And, in that way, he is a true example of what it means to be an outstanding DSP,” writes Molly Bye in her letter nominating him as Minnesota’s DSP of the Year.

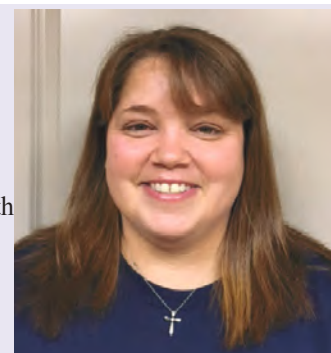
Molly, a Program Coordinator, says that Tom’s biggest accomplishments can really be summarized by two facts: “First, in the last year alone, Tom has helped more than 15 people maintain independent living in their own apartments. Second, he has helped five people look for or maintain their own jobs in the community. That is over 20 lives where people are living, working and doing more for themselves. He is truly making a difference in a way that fundamentally aligns with the wider, community-integration initiatives happening in our field.”

He has helped many individuals navigate the complexities and sometimes dangers, of maintaining independent living. Tom motivated a young woman to attend a job fair even though her confidence level was low. He kept her focused on her goal of finding a job. When they were not together, Tom convinced a young man, who had been unemployed for years, to look for a job on his own. “All on his own, the young man walked into a KFC, saw their ‘Now Hiring’ sign, asked to talk to the manager, and was hired on the spot. He is now working four to five days a week,” Molly writes.

He’s always checking in with and stopping by to talk with the people he supports to let them all know they matter to him – even when he’s not at work. He’s quietly helping them develop relationships in their own social networks. Tom will drive people to meet new potential roommates and guides them on how to talk with people they don’t know but are trying to learn about as a prospective roommate.

“Tom’s unwavering commitment to meeting people where they are is demonstrated by an ethos of day-in and day-out person-centered thinking,” Molly says.

MISSISSIPPI
TANYA CROY
The MENTOR Network
Oxford, MS



Tanya Croy

She is described as a DSP with “tons of energy” and “is all about building relationships” and “creativity is so easy for her” and “she wants our consumers to understand why being ethical is so important to developing character.” Tanya is Mississippi’s DSP of the Year and has made quite an impact in her two years with The MENTOR Network.

Here are but a few examples of her work as a DSP from Tish Dettor, who nominated Tanya for this honor:

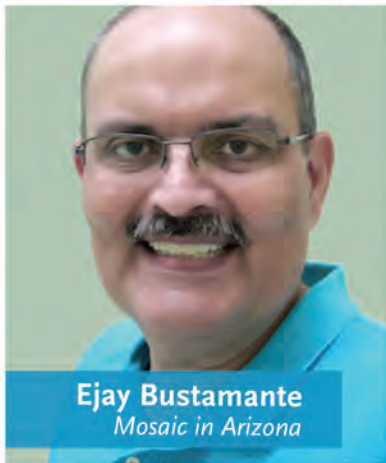
- “She has advocated for clients being able to participate in community improvement projects and she recently worked with some of our people to assist the State Park in refurbishing its mini golf course. This taught the community a lot about what our people are able to accomplish.”
- “Tanya is all about building relationships. She assisted one of our men who uses a wheelchair to be able to get to the rehabilitation center to see his brother, who had a stroke. This was such a wonderful gesture to make sure he got to see his brother. She has taken this same man back several times to see his brother.”
- “She is constantly coming up with woodworking projects, arts and crafts projects, culinary ideas, and outings. Many of our consumers have had little socialization or the ability to be creative. Tanya has worked with them to develop Hippie Day where they made tie dyed t-shirts and enjoy a Luau where they learned how to do relay races. She taught them how to make door decorations, build bird houses, and how to bargain shop at Flea Markets. She taught one man how to use a sander in the woodworking shop.”

A DSP for five years, she teaches and models the importance of being respectful and using good manners. She wants the people she supports to be able to identify appropriate ways to confront things that are frustrating them. She teaches them honesty and the importance of developing friendships. She also shows them the importance of being trustworthy. “She is a giver, not a taker,” Tish says.

Congratulations

to these five state winners who represent the thousands of Mosaic employees doing great things for people every day.

ARIZONA



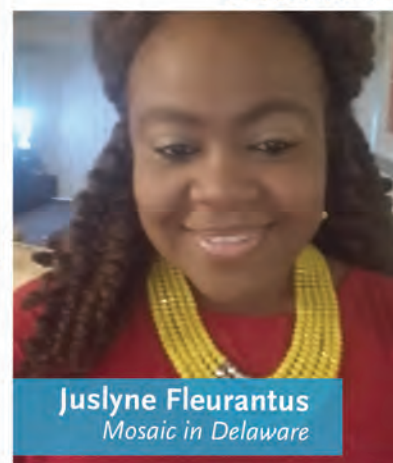
Ejay Bustamante
Mosaic in Arizona

CONNECTICUT



Angela Page
Mosaic in Connecticut

DELAWARE



Juslyne Fleurantus
Mosaic in Delaware

KANSAS



Tom Marchant
Mosaic in Garden City

NEBRASKA



Andrew Landon
Mosaic in Beatrice



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Rick Maclin

MISSOURI
Rick Maclin
Easterseals Midwest
Earth City, MO

Fourteen of Rick Maclin's 17 years as a DSP have been spent at Easterseals Midwest. He is a DSP who goes

that extra mile for the people he supports. One major example is a gentleman he began supporting more than five years ago. The man needed a job. He quickly learned that the man had some health issues that limited him somewhat in what jobs he could handle. No matter. Rick sought out employers who offered jobs that he could do without limitations and who also were willing to accommodate his needs.

Rick found him a job as a server at a local restaurant and supported him through the application and interview process and helped him get acclimated to the job.

Something else special happened in this relationship. The man grew to love and respect Rick and told him that he was the first black man he knew and that thanks to Rick his fears and stereotypes about men of color had vanished.

Several months ago doctors discovered that this same man needed a heart transplant. Lynn Winterberg, the Director of Supported Employment at Easterseals, nominated Rick for this honor and she continues with this story:

"Rick continued supporting him and his family. Rick would text and call him to keep his spirits up, relay information to his employer as necessary to relieve the family of this task, and he even drove the long distance to visit him at the hospital where he was staying until his transplant surgery. Rick was present with the man's family when he received his new heart. Rick's consistency during this time provided the man and his entire family with a vital source of emotional support." The man has done OK since the surgery and Rick maintains his contact and support with him.

About Rick, Lynn adds this: "Rick is friendly, has a huge heart and is a father figure to many of the young men on his caseload. Rick's role is a combination of sales and social worker. Rick is always "on" and marketing our individuals and our agency at the basketball court, church and when getting something to eat. Rick never turns off his charm and lives our mission of helping individuals with disabilities, including Autism, find employment."



Nikki Koontz

MONTANA
NIKKI KOONTZ
Opportunity Resources, Inc.
Missoula, MT

These words from the person who nominated Nikki to be the DSP of the Year in Montana tell you a great deal about this

DSP of 10 years: "Nikki takes the time to do the little special things for them (the people she supports) just as you and I would for our loved ones," writes Sheila Thompson in her letter of nomination

Take for instance the woman who was living alone in her home with minimal supports who was beginning to show signs of aging. Soon after her 70th birthday she began falling more on a regular basis and her guardian wanted to move her into a nursing home. Nikki wanted her to be in a Foster Care situation. The guardian was against this idea, so Nikki asked the doctor for her opinion. The doctor also supported the nursing home solution. With Nikki's support she moved to the Foster Care home where she lived for almost a year with her new puppy before breaking her hip and having to go to a nursing home after all. But she had a great year with her puppy. Nikki's effective advocacy paid off

Many times DSPs need to be creative. Nikki was. She was supporting a man who had recently retired who started gaining weight – a lot of weight. She found out what kind of foods he liked to eat and introduced him to "Crock Pot Meals." Nikki and staff make a meal every morning using the foods that he likes by putting a small portion of low-fat meat and many, many vegetables into the crock pot. He eats every bite! He has lost over 40 pounds and is very excited about the meals and very proud of his weight loss.

Person-Centered Supports are a forte of Nikki's. Ms. Thompson says. "Nikki makes sure she knows the dreams and desires of every person she supports. She is currently supporting seven people who live in their homes. Nikki comes up with ways to help them realize their dreams. Nikki appreciates each person as an individual and celebrates who they are and what they want to do in their life."



Andrew Landon

NEBRASKA
ANDREW LANDON
Mosaic
Beatrice, NE

Andrew Landon makes dreams happen for those he supports at Mosaic. Alicia Buhr nominated Andrew to be Nebraska's DSP of the Year. One man he supports is passionate about Nebraska Husker football. A few years back Andrew got them tickets for a Husker home game in Lincoln, NE. This man is in a wheelchair and it was not an issue. Not only did John attend the game -- Andrew ensured that John was in the tunnel for the Tunnel Walk as the players came out of their lockerroom. He met a few of the players as well as Larry the Cable Guy! This is now an annual tradition for them.

Another man he supports uses a wheelchair and has communications and vision issues. Andrew made sure there were no barriers. Andrew now rides rollercoasters with him at Worlds of Fun, took him to a ZZ Top concert and to a Huey Lewis and The News concert. This man also loves recipes and he wanted to submit his recipes to a local radio station for its annual cookbook. Andrew made it happen as they together took the recipes to KWBE Radio.

At Mosaic he supports the People First group, which focuses on helping people understand their rights. During these meetings, the individuals are able to meet other people who live in the community and build friendships and connections.

Andrew ensures that he and his family include the people he supports in their lives as well. Andrew, on his own time, includes people in his family's events, celebrations and/or just to "hang out" at his home. Andrew includes his men with his band members and brings them to concerts as his special guests. He's also a CPR instructor for the staff and he even started a caroling group during the December holiday season. On his own time, he'll bring his guitar and perform for folks or lead sing alongs.

NEVADA
DAWN NEDDENRIEP
Dungarvin
Reno, NV



Dawn Neddenriep

Dawn is a DSP with 22 years of experience who has supported children and adults with developmental disabilities in a variety of settings -- residential, vocational training, individual residential elder care, and in-home support. She is known and respected for her compassion and advocacy focus and one person who has known her professionally for 15 years says of her: "Dawn is one of the most conscientious professionals I have ever known...and I have endless admiration for her unflagging focus on the welfare, betterment and success of her charges."

Today, she supports two men who live in her home with her and her family. Dawn had been the home manager where these men lived and when it closed she stepped in and advocated for them to live with her. That was three years ago. The men are now the most independent they have ever been. She has a large extended family and knew this would be a difficult transition. With her help and support, they are now happily members of her family.

She has taught one of the men how to use a debit card, balance a budget and keep track of receipts. He required full supervision when shopping. Dawn got creative and printed out paper money and basic math sheets. Every night she practiced math skills using his fake money. Now, he understands the value of each bill -- that \$1 can buy a candy bar whereas \$20 can buy him a new shirt. She also has taught them how to cook and twice a week they go to a gym.

In addition to her work at Dungarvin, Nevada's DSP of the Year has served as the lead fundraiser of a local organization called "Brain" that provides supports to individuals with traumatic brain injury. With Dawn's effort, Brain has recently moved into its own building. Dawn has served on the Human Rights Committee at Eagle Valley Children's Center and reached out to doctors and lawyers to obtain supports for individuals served, to ensure their rights were being enforced and their welfare was a priority.



Kofi Dom

NEW JERSEY
KOFI DOM
Dungarvin
Edison, NJ

Having the ability to be creative is a skill that DSPs need to have and this DSP of five years

at Dungarvin in Edison has it and then some. In nominating him to be the New Jersey DSP of the Year, Kathleen Cody, the agency's Area Director, explained how Kofi was able to get all of the individuals he supports to go see a movie – together. "These people at Kenmore have not attended a movie in a long time, primarily because several of the individuals have trouble with sitting for the full length of the movie," Ms. Cody says. So what did Kofi do? He took the time to individually help each person prepare for going to the movie theater by taking one individual at a time, and letting him choose the movie, pick the place to sit in the theater, choose the snack, and go at a time when the theater was not too crowded. He did this for all of the men and they've now been to the movies together many times. "They really enjoy the outing as evidenced by the expressions on their faces!" Ms. Cody says.

He is successfully helping another man budget and save his money to buy a Play Station 4. Kofi has taken him to stores to compare prices and given him supportive counseling and advice on how to save enough money. They now have a date on the calendar when he will have enough money to buy the Play Station.

When it comes to relationships, Kofi knows how to develop trusting relationships. Some days he'll pick up one of the men he supports from the day program and they'll go out for coffee to just sit and talk and be together. Ms. Cody says that this man has developed a special bond with Kofi. "He tends to keep to himself and doesn't like to participate in a lot of activities. Kofi spends time with him talking about different things that he enjoys, and assists him with practicing his writing skills and counting money," she explained.



Guadalupe Leon

NEW MEXICO
GUADALUPE LEON
Dungarvin
Albuquerque, NM

Lupe Leon is well known and much respected at Dungarvin in New Mexico. She is a Residential Coordinator, a DSP

for 22 years who supports clients who are medically complex and fragile. In nominating Lupe as New Mexico's DSP of the Year, Dungarvin's Area Director, Brianne Conner, had this to say of her: "For more than 20 years now we are lucky to have Lupe's creativity and caring support within our organization."

DSPs areas of focus are Advocacy, Relationships, Creativity and Integrity and Responsibility. There are solid examples of each that Ms. Conner included in her letter of nomination.

Her advocacy is explained here: "A recent example involves a man who is medically complex and receiving hospice services. This person has a very large interdisciplinary team that includes an extended family, medical professionals, therapists, and state monitors. Most staff are intimidated in this type of environment. Lupe, however, knows this individual well – takes detailed notes during all home visits, treatments, and therapy – and comes to meetings prepared to advocate for what he needs. She speaks readily, voicing concerns of the staff and shedding light on what the individual's nuanced behavior might mean. Due to this advocacy, this individual's quality of life and level of care are continually elevated. The example she provides for all staff has carried over to their work ethic and attitudes as they support the individuals in the home as well."

Creativity is one of her many strong points. "Lupe has a gift of interpretation, not only due to her skills as a bilingual DSP, but also in her high level understanding of therapy plans and nutritional plans," Ms. Conner says. "She translates therapy requirements to skills that can easily be taught to other DSPs. She even develops recipes that staff can follow that are nutritious and taste good as well.

One woman whose son has been supported for 15 years by Lupe says of her: "I have come to know, respect, depend on and trust Lupe explicitly with the care of my son, who needs around the clock care. Lupe is an excellent worker -- honest, smart, intuitive, compassionate, and very caring."



Wendy Herringshaw

NEW YORK
WENDY HERRINGSHAW
 ARC Herkimer
 Herkimer, NY

It's all about the people she supports and this DSP of 15 years focuses on relationships, person-

centered tactics and outcomes. Jason Marlow at ARC Herkimer nominated her to be the New York DSP of the Year and his narrative about what all she does validates his nomination:

He wrote of her: "Wendy provides the people she supports with education on building intimate relationships, including utilizing social media/dating sites. Wendy conducts monthly safety meetings with the people she supports on topics like fire safety, stranger danger, cold/hot weather precautions, and even bed bug reporting. Wendy reviews and shares information with the people she supports about their files and where that information is located

Wendy has worked with the people she supports to set up volunteer opportunities with the humane society and the Salvation Army. Wendy's commitment to people extends to those she mentors and leads. People she has mentored have graduated from leadership programs, been members of DSPANYS & NADSP, attend conferences, and are seated on boards of directors and committees. No matter what, Wendy is committed to ensuring people have quality lives.

One person she supports felt strongly about volunteering at a nursing home. Wendy urged her to make phone calls, write letters and complete an application. She worked with the person's guardian and after several months they were approved to be a volunteer. That worked out so well that her client was offered a job at the nursing home.

Another individual she supports was selected to make a speech at an agency function to raise money for the agency's self-advocacy group. This person had given speeches before, but this function was scheduled to have over 200 people attending. Wendy helped this person craft the speech, provided reassurance and praise, and practiced with them and other members of their support team. The speech was a huge success and more than \$20,000 was raised for the self-advocacy group.

NORTH CAROLINA
RICKY HAMM
 ResCare
 Wilkesboro, NC



Ricky Hamm

One man this DSP supports is autistic and non-verbal. Ricky is known for and respected for his creativity and his willingness to individualize therapeutic approaches for his consumers. When he began supporting this man, he thought it important to attend TEACHH (autism) training so he could learn more about how to actively work with him and better understand his autism. In addition to the training, Ricky bought supplies to build his own activities and games to engage him.

Showing respect to his clients is a big part of Ricky's skill set. He consistently provides confidentiality and privacy, and uses language which shows his respect for their rights, ideas and individuality. Ricky is very adept at de-escalating behavioral situations before they begin. He is the regional CPR instructor for ResCare and works hard on the agency's community service projects and Special Olympics.

North Carolina's DSP of the Year is very dedicated to his clients and his work. He'll stay the night at his group home if a client is having a particularly rough time. Also, Ricky has demonstrated competency as evidenced by his state survey results over the years.

The staff respects him as do the family members of those he supports. Here is what the mother of one of his clients says about Ricky: "I thank God for Ricky Hamm and I hope the executives at his agency know his worth and show him appreciation and thank him for all he does for our loved ones. He is a selfless man. He is one of a kind and we (the families) truly wouldn't have the home you have made for all of the men were it not for you!"



Cristina Gregoire

NORTH DAKOTA
CRISTINA GREGOIRE
Hit, Inc.
Mandan, ND

When you read Sam Kapp's letter of nomination about Cristina, you clearly see a DSP who is big on building relationships and having a keen eye for details. Little things add up to big things. While a man she

supports was having a lengthy hospital stay, the man's father came back into his life and wanted to get to know him and help with supporting him. So Cristina began supporting the father as well, teaching him how to best communicate with his mostly non-verbal son. She helped him learn about his son -- his likes, dislikes and preferences. When the man was discharged, Cristina encouraged the father to continue visiting and shared her excitement with the man she supports each time he came. "Her caring and giving attitude helped facilitate and grow this relationship," Sam wrote in his nomination.

A client Cristina works with was obsessively painting her fingernails to the point of causing infections. A doctor recommended she stop using nail polish. Appearance is important to this woman and she takes great pride in how she looks. "Cristina brought several different ideas to the team about alternative options to painting her nails and with team approval, Cristina worked with the client to try and find an option that allowed her to maintain the appearance she wanted while staying healthy," Sam writes.

Cristina has learned sign language to help her better communicate with her clients. She used resources in and outside of the agency to learn useful signs for a specific client and taught the client the meaning of the signs and how to do them. She has also taught other staff members the signs she uses for her communications so there is consistency across the board.

OHIO
PAM NGUM
Dungarvin
Columbus, OH



Pam Ngum

Pam is a DSP who changes lives. Her support of one woman is proof positive and led to her being named Ohio's DSP of the Year. She has worked at Dungarvin for six years and her sustained support and advocacy have profoundly impacted the life of this woman.

The woman is not easily understood and struggles to express herself. Pam serves as her interpreter. "The close relationship that Pam has built with her over the years has provided her a unique ability to understand her," says Chrissy Hilgendorff at Dungarvin, who nominated Pam. "Pam never talks FOR her. Pam will ask her a series of questions to determine what she is trying to express."

This woman is a diabetic and admits that she's a "pop-a-holic." Her doctor ordered her to cut down on her liquid intake, that it was affecting her liver. The DSPs at the home struggled to help her adjust to this change. Then Pam came up with the idea to buy her mini-cans of pop and child-size juice boxes. It worked. She was able to maintain the frequency that she preferred to have these drinks while cutting her overall intake. And Pam never eats or drinks the things that this woman needs to avoid to remain healthy.

She told Pam about someone at work that she liked talking with. So Pam encouraged her to invite her new friend to lunch and this has led to a great friendship. She now spends time with this new friend outside of work. They visit in their homes and in the community.

Pam also helps her with family relationships. She's on the go with this woman. They flew together to New York for her brother's wedding and she went with her to her family's annual vacation in Florida.

Through Pam's motivation, she is involved in many social and recreational opportunities that she thoroughly enjoys, Chrissy says. "She participates in church groups, picnics, ladies' dinner nights, recreation center outings, fitness club, and community dances. This year Pam inspired her to try bowling, and now she is preparing to participate on the Special Olympics bowling team for a second year!" she said.



Carolyn Stanford

OKLAHOMA
CAROLYN STANFORD
*Dungarvin
Moore, OK*

Carolyn has had to use her many experiences she's had during her 21 years as a DSP to support three men.

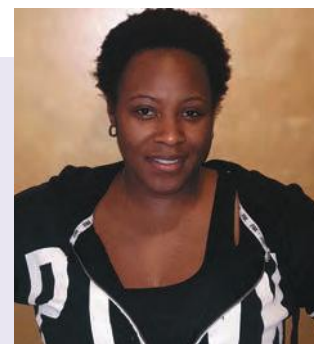
She was told these men could "never do anything." She has proven that wrong. One man kept saying his stomach hurt while having challenging behaviors. She knew something was wrong. Off to the ER they went. He needed gallbladder surgery. Another of the three men refused to get out of bed. Carolyn advocated for home alone time for him. He got out of the bed. Carolyn listened when the third man said he wanted more money. She spoke up for him at the workshop where they increased his hours and gave him jobs that pay more. How's that for effective advocacy!

Oklahoma's DSP of the Year promotes family and friend relationships. "Carolyn keeps all the families informed about issues and concerns, as well as the good things that happen," writes Program Director Angela Wheeler in nominating Carolyn for this honor. "She has taught the gentlemen how to be friends with each other. She has created a home situation where three completely different personalities live together peacefully."

Carolyn has tapped into the things that they enjoy. One man enjoys fishing so now he goes fishing twice a week. Then he wanted to go to a football game without staff, so she found a solution. "His guardian has seen a great change in him during his home visits and is amazed at how Carolyn has improved his quality of life. Carolyn raises the expectations for each individual so that they achieve more," Angela says.

The three men go to weekly dances. They have jobs. One now rides a train to visit family and friends.

Here is what one mother of one of the men says about Carolyn: "I can't say enough good things about her. She cares so much and gives so much and yet gets so little in return. Clients don't always realize how lucky they are to have a person who is not their mother care for them just like a mother would do. We are proud to call Carolyn our son's surrogate mother."



Nikiea Pankey

OREGON
NIKIEA PANKEY
*Dungarvin
Portland, OR*

"Nikiea is a great voice for those who may not have one, and encourages those who do to use it to their fullest!"

This quote from Brenda Linden, a Dungarvin Program Director, is how she describes this DSP of just two years. Brenda nominated her as the state's DSP of the Year. "When providers or visitors in the home only address her and other staff, she kindly asks that they speak directly to the individuals. She encourages the individuals to use their voices when they want something changed," Brenda added.

One man she supports didn't like getting up early for the day program. She encouraged him to talk with his day program staff and the program director at his home to ask for a change. He was successfully moved to the afternoon session and has been happy ever since. It makes him even happier to know that he made that happen on his own – with a gentle nudge from Nikiea. Another gentleman describes himself as "a ladies man" but was refusing to shower. Nikiea started reminding him that he wants to look good for the ladies at work. Now he showers. Another gentle nudge.

"Everything Nikiea does at work is for the individuals we support. Everything that she sets up at the house from decorations to supports from staff is based on the individuals and their wishes. She consistently reminds the staff that they are working in someone's home and that they need to respect it as such," Brenda says. "She is a role model to all the other staff in the home."

One individual she supports lost his dog to old age and wanted a new puppy. Now he has his new puppy. Nikiea has stepped up since Suzy came to the home and has helped him take her to vet appointments and sign up for obedience classes. "He has been so much happier since she came into his life and with the help of Nikiea, she is becoming a wonderful addition to the home," Brenda says. "Nikiea does everything she can to help the individuals have the best quality of life as possible."



Gerson Ortiz

PENNSYLVANIA
GERSON ORTIZ
Access Services
Allentown, PA

He's a 4th degree black belt, a DSP for 10 years and at Access Services he's an innovator. We're talking about

Gerson Ortiz, who has translated his love of karate into a full-blown martial arts program at Access that has spread to other Access sites in three towns now.

Access Occupational Therapist Bev Weinberg nominated him as the Pennsylvania DSP of the Year and says of him: "Gerson is a gifted martial arts instructor for individuals of all abilities, largely due to his own extraordinary ability to modify and adapt exercises to provide each individual with the 'just right' challenge."

This program he directs has inspired Access to embrace a larger integrated health focus, exploring additional ways to offer innovative opportunities to promote physical and mental health among the people it supports. Here is what's going on: people with disabilities have the opportunity to challenge their sedentary lifestyles, develop self-discipline, body awareness, focus, cardiovascular health, strength, and self-confidence. Each participant has his or her own uniform.

"When teaching martial arts, Gerson is working on their physical skills, but he is concurrently developing essential skills underlying successful social interaction. During class, Gerson explicitly incorporates lessons about body awareness, personal space, and respect," Weinberg says. "These 'soft skills' are often a challenge for those he supports, yet so important for the desired social and vocational outcomes. Individuals have the opportunity to practice these skills, and then apply them when they volunteer, work, and interact in their communities."

Due to his success in the day program, Gerson, who is from Chile, is now working with the Access CEO and others to move this program into the local YMCA, offering individuals with disabilities the opportunity to see themselves as integrated community members with talent and an ability to share, and for others to view them in the same light.

Gerson's promotion ceremonies where new belt colors are awarded to acknowledge hard work and improvement are indeed popular. "Dozens of individuals stand a little taller, smile a little bigger, and realize that their true limitations are only those they set for themselves," Weinberg added. "A noted Chinese proverb states, 'When the mind is ready, a teacher appears.' Everyone should be so lucky."

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
VERONICA ROTARU
Keystone Human Services
International
Chisinau, Republic of
Moldova



Veronica Rotaru

Veronica is a DSP of three years who works in The Supported Living service from Falesti, a community-based service designed for six persons with intellectual disabilities who were deinstitutionalized from large residential institutions. It's a challenging place for any DSP. Nominated by Nicolae Ciocan, Veronica has been named as the International DSP of the Year.

Nicolae focused her nomination on Veronica's support for one man in particular. The man is 36 and spent 33 years in different residential institutions. His dream was to have a job to earn his own money. Veronica made a great effort to make connections with local people and managed to find him a suitable job. He also wanted a family – his lifelong dream.

She searched for his family to no avail. Veronica also started looking for possibilities to buy a house and she worked with a foundation to buy the house. "The biggest challenge for Veronica was to prepare him for independent living and assuming the responsibilities for a relationship as he got engaged and they want to get married and have children," Nicolae said.

After three years of work his dream is reality – he owns his own home. Then he was hired with a municipal sanitation company. He's using the money to renovate the house. Veronica then initiated a fund-raising campaign in the community that involved 100 people. "Also, thanks to Veronica, many volunteer activities were organized to support the renovation and furnishing his house. Veronica is proud of the success because this man is the first person from a supported living institution that managed to move to independent living and become a homeowner," she added.

Veronica believed in this man's dream and helped make it happen. She says that the most difficult issue for her to overcome is the temptation to make choices for the person as there is always a protection tendency. "The most important lesson for me is that trust should be learned. And that promises are perhaps the basic condition for building trust," Veronica said.



Vonda Dotson

SOUTH CAROLINA
VONDA DOTSON
 ResCare
 Rock Hill, SC

This DSP of 10 years has worked for ResCare for two years and in those two years her track record is one

of success story after success story. So it's not a surprise that she's now the DSP of the Year in South Carolina.

One of Vonda's clients was trying to get housing assistance and live independently. Prior to her supports, his mother had to do everything for him. Vonda taught him how to assist with his bath, help transfer himself, make decisions and develop a budget. He's now living on his own with the agency's assistance.

She does games and puzzles with one woman she supports who has a developmental disability. The games and puzzles keep her learning. She takes her to different community events to help her with socialization. Another client with a brain injury could not remember how to put his cabinets back together. So Vonda created a game with him to teach him the steps for putting the doors back on his cabinets.

Her letter of nomination says about her: "Vonda builds relationships with her clients and treats them with respect. She is the one DSP we can send into a home and the client always wants her to come back permanently. She goes above and beyond for the people we serve. She is always willing to work someone into her schedule, no matter how early she starts or how late she ends. We wish all our DSPs were like Vonda."

Not too long ago Vonda attended an event on the behalf of the agency. The company did not have a table there so she walked around passing out fliers and talked about the services ResCare provides. As a result her efforts that day, ResCare started getting more referrals in that area, which is now its biggest service area.



Molly Hammitt

SOUTH DAKOTA
MOLLY HAMMITT
 SESDAC
 Vermillion, SD

Molly has worked as a Home Manager for the past two years, supporting the same core group of people. Joseph Hoose, the agency's

Human Resources Director, nominated her for the DSP of the Year award. In his letter of nomination he describes those who she supports as "a dynamic group".

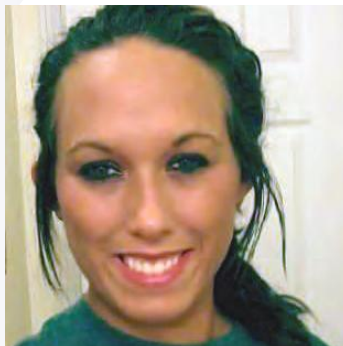
Hoose writes: "Relationships have been built and developed naturally over time. For Molly each relationship is different and she recognizes that it takes time to build those. A dynamic house needs a dynamic leader and that is what Molly brings to the table."

As a Home Manager she is known as a strong advocate who recognizes that while she has to be a voice for people, she also has to take a step back and advocate by staying in the background. One man wants his own apartment so he can live independently. Molly has worked with him about how to reach his goal.

This is a dramatic change for him, so how he is supported has to change, but there are responsibilities that come with this change. This person has identified a plan to achieve his goal and Molly is careful not do things for him --but to empower him to check things off the list. This is a driving force of how she supports this person.

Molly knows what it means to be person-centered. She understands that in order to deliver the best service she must appreciate and respect each person's perspective. Her approach in supporting people accomplish things is for them to take small steps.

"From supporting a person to live in their own apartment, to supporting someone to be the vice president of People First, to supporting someone to maintain healthy relationships with family and friends, each time you can see her working with people in a very measured way," Hoose says. "She is so good at her job that we sometimes don't realize it until we take a step back and at that point we are truly amazed."



Alyssa Shoun

TENNESSEE
ALYSSA SHOUN
*Core Services of
 Northeast Tennessee
 Johnson City, TN*

Susan Arwood, the Executive Director of Core Services, makes no bones when she talks about this

DSP of 10 years. “Alyssa’s role as a DSP is not a job description but a way of life ... She exemplifies the gold standard for Direct Support Professionals and is very worthy of recognition.”

Alyssa is a Team Leader in a supported living home with three “wonderful” ladies. She supports the ladies in every facet of their lives – from the basic assurances such as clean clothes, a clean home, making adequate and healthy food choices – to nurturing an environment of respect and personal choice. She sits down with the ladies weekly as they plan a menu using picture cards of foods. The ladies assist in writing a grocery list and doing the shopping. “Alyssa helps the people she supports feel and be in control of their money, day-to-day operation of their home and as many choices in their lives as possible,” Arwood says. She stays on top of medical issues, goes with them to appointments and is always aware of their medical history and medications. She assists her ladies in participating in healthcare decisions, such as choosing the time and date of their next appointment, asking questions, and communicating with their doctor. “She is an outspoken advocate when she hears decisions being made without the person’s opportunity for input,” Arwood says.

After attending Person Centered Thinking training Alyssa took PCT tools and put them to use. For a very social individual new to our agency Alyssa spent weeks developing a relationship map to reconnect this individual with friends she had lost contact with. Alyssa knows the right balance of communication with families and supports each person in maintaining close contact. She goes out of her way to make sure people visit with their families. This includes driving two-hours after her assigned shift to give someone a ride. That’s known as “going the extra mile!”

TEXAS
CHASIDY WILLIAMS
*ResCare
 San Antonio, TX*



Chasidy Williams

It may seem like a little thing – but it’s not. It involves two NADSP tenets: Creativity and Promoting Physical and Emotion-

al Well Being. Chasidy knew that the people she supported in ResCare’s group homes needed exercise. So this DSP of five years started an exercise group for those clients in her group homes by taking them walking in the park -- daily. It involves the staff and individuals, and encourages healthy living and weight control. It also helps them form a bond with the staff and other individuals while working on a common goal. Chasidy is well loved by the ladies she supports and goes beyond her expected duties to support and encourage them.

That little thing is a major thing in the daily lives of those she supports and is but one reason she has been selected as the Texas DSP of the Year.

Chasidy is an advocate for individuals, especially those who can’t speak and express what they want. One non-verbal man loves his morning coffee. He was not able to let the staff know what he wanted. When Chasidy found out he loved his morning coffee, she made sure that all of the staff working in that home made sure he got his coffee. This seems like another small thing -- but to this man it was huge.

Chasidy also has advocated for several of the supported individuals to find outside jobs when others thought they would not be successful. She set up and attended meetings and took them to interviews. She always encourages them and lets them know she believes in them. She has followed up and visited job sites to make sure all is well.

One woman’s family refused to let her come home for visits because of issues with stealing. Chasidy talked to her and helped her realize that there were better ways to handle her problems, and now she is able to go home on a regular basis. The woman also got a job in the kitchen of a restaurant, which has instilled pride.



Gina Brown

VERMONT
GINA BROWN
*Green Mountain
 Support Services
 Morrisville, VT*

Sonja Crowe began her nomination letter for this DSP of 15 years with these simple and significant words: "Gina goes above and beyond to advocate for

the individuals she supports." Then she recounted a number of stories about the wonderful and effective supports Gina provides for two men. Those stories and more led to her being honored as Vermont's DSP of the Year.

A man who is non verbal was helped by Gina. She downloaded a program on her personal phone for him to use to communicate and now, thanks to Gina's continued advocacy, he is in the process of seeing a speech and language pathologist to extend his communication needs and skills.

Gina, Ms. Crowe says, is exceptional at person-centered thinking, evidenced by her individualizing the daily support programs for the two individuals she currently supports by their wants and needs. "These two men emit such enjoyment and enthusiasm for their upcoming day when they are in the presence of Gina. It is truly a remarkable sight that is hard to explain with words!" Ms. Crowe added.

Ms. Crowe, who is a Program Manager at Green Mountain, tells us that Gina has supported many individuals throughout her 15 years with the agency. "She has taken individuals into her home in emergency crisis situations even when there have been deaths in the individual's families or in that of their home providers," she says. "These individuals have reported that the comfort, support and assistance Gina has provided them during these times of need have been above and beyond what they expected from a respite person they barely knew."

VIRGINIA
CHRISTIE LACEFIELD
*Hope House Foundation
 Norfolk, VA*

Christie began her DSP career at Hope House four years ago. She was nominated by Hope House Team Leader Teresa Versprille for this honor as Virginia's DSP of the Year. "Christie is very well liked and respected by her co-workers and the individuals she supports," Teresa says. "She works very effectively with individuals who have more challenging behaviors due to her calm demeanor and empathetic nature. Christie is kind, dedicated, and hard working."

One thing that she did touched many lives. She put a lot of energy and time – much of it her own time – in creating videos about the lives of two men who recently passed away. "Christie created heartfelt 'Celebration of Life' videos about these two gentlemen," Teresa tells us. "Christie gathered photos and video footage from their families and friends, and on her own time, created funny, poignant, and beautiful memorials. Christie spent many hours creating these high quality videos. Their families were so moved and they were so appreciative to have such an amazing keepsake to remember their loved ones."

Here is what one woman whose brother is supported by Christie says: "Christie's nurturing manner, fun mannerisms and genuine caring is what has made the difference in my brother's life as well as the many other individuals under her direct care."

Her supports are very creative. Christie introduced two men to the game of pool at a neighborhood bar where she used to be a server. That led to her having them go to an "open mic night" at a nearby coffee house where they support local performers while sipping coffee. They've made new friends in the community and are enjoying these new experiences.



Christie Lacefield

CONGRATULATIONS DAWN GARDNER!

*ANCOR'S 2017 MASSACHUSETTS
 DSP OF THE YEAR
 AWARD RECIPIENT!*

Dawn Gardner is an inspiring Support Coordinator and DSP who takes her responsibilities seriously. She advocates beyond all expectations for the individuals that she supports. Dawn is a passionate, creative and dedicated DSP who is committed to WCI's Mission. On behalf of the Board of Directors and everyone at WCI, we are grateful for all that you do.



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Wesley Jones

WASHINGTON
WESLEY JONES
Skils'kin
Spokane, WA

He creates an inclusive and engaging environment. He increases individuals' autonomy and self

determination for those he supports. He is big on community integration. He solves problems with creativity and innovation. Wesley Jones is the DSP described here and Tami Dillon at Skils'kin nominated him as DSP of the Year for Washington. He stays busy and makes sure the people he supports enjoy life. He plans family-style dinners, builds gardens with and for individuals to enjoy, and cooks barbecue meals during the summer. All holidays and birthdays are celebrated with decorations, special food and guests.

One man he supports was continually engaged in self-injurious behaviors. Wes identified the triggers that caused his behavior issues and created ways to calm the individual. He

began by painting the room a warmer color, changing the light bulbs to not be as harsh, purchasing new linens in coordinating warmer hues and he worked with all service providers to speak in calmer tones. He also created a direct path so the man was able to move through his room more easily. Instead of stopping his efforts, "Wes continued to do research and found that a salt lamp could potentially help this individual to have a better energy in his living space," Tami wrote in her nomination. "Because Wes creatively individualized his support, this man is now thriving, much less volatile and thankful for his warmer surroundings."

Wes, a DSP for almost eight years, supports a woman who struggled for a long time with leaving her home. Wes worked to build a trusting relationship and develop her coping skills. She would yell, throw items and occasionally disrobe. "Through Wes' determination and diligence, she now enjoys going out and her challenging behaviors have diminished while in public. He has succeeded with this woman by continually reinforcing behaviors in a more positive way," Tami explains.



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Christopher Thompson

WEST VIRGINIA
CHRISTOPHER
THOMPSON
ResCare
Princeton, WV

Chris has been a DSP for only a year, but he handled what could have been an explosive situation like a

veteran DSP. He works in a group home setting with eight individuals who have varying levels of intellectual disabilities and significant behavioral challenges.

Recently, Chris took a group to a local fitness center. During the visit, other people there began making derogatory comments about the people Chris brought to the center. Although this upset Chris, he remained professional and addressed the issue with the manager on site. Chris used this opportunity to teach the consumers about “being the better person” and controlling their reactions even when others are not kind. As a result of Chris’ actions, the manager on site addressed the situation with the individuals making the inappropriate statements, and the consumers continue to enjoy participating in activities at the fitness center several times each week.

That, along with other supports, is why Chris is being honored as the DSP of the Year in West Virginia.

Larry Weishaar of ResCare nominated Chris and shares more about this DSP: “Consumers who Chris supports have various behavioral challenges and he has done an excellent job of creating relationships and routines with everyone, which often can divert or extinguish behavioral issues,” Weishaar writes. For example, a man who loves electronics and video games often has explosive episodes when he is asked to follow his schedule and transition away from those activities to complete training programs in the home and community. Chris has initiated a “skit” of sorts in which he pretends that he “doesn’t know how to sweep” and needs this man to “teach” him how to do it. Chris will intentionally perform the task wrong, which immediately leads to the man correcting him and subsequently “teaching” him how to complete the task. “It is apparent that the man loves playing the role of teacher/helper and Chris regularly uses this technique to keep him on the right track of balancing leisure with responsibilities,” Weishaar says.



Xia Xiong

WISCONSIN
XIA XIONG
Innovative Services, Inc.
Kaukauna, WI

Xia works primarily in a Level 5 Foster Home and this home requires the most stringent training for its DSP support staff. One man with challenging behaviors was planning to spend Christmas with his family – his parents and his brother. Xia was instrumental in preparing him for this. This was the first time in years that he had visited them for Christmas.

“Xia assisted with developing social stories as a learning tool to prepare him on what to expect, planning what equipment was necessary and working through multiple scenarios,” explained Kerry Blondheim, who nominated Xia to be the Wisconsin DSP of the Year. “Any time Xia notes a potential concern, she brings it forward to discuss solutions for the best outcomes. When the manager of the program is not working, Xia takes the lead in advocating for both the man as well as her peers to ensure all their needs are met.”

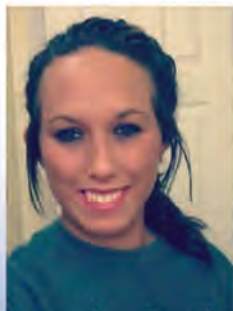
Xia is so into supporting this man that she turned down a promotion because she would not be working with him any longer on a regular basis.

“Xia is someone with the skills and work ethic to easily advance within the organization,” Kerry added. “She continues to work at a variety of programs, though, to further develop her skills and her knowledge of different diagnoses. Xia embraces the challenge of learning new material and then applying it with each person she supports. Xia never lets the fear of the unknown scare her because of her amazing ability to adapt to whatever the situation presents.”

Kerry explains that Xia has excelled in championing safety within the program for both staff and those they support. Xia has been recognized on multiple occasions by her peers for championing safety protocols. “Xia developed the method to safely buckle and unbuckle a man in vehicles to minimize risk for the staff. This creative approach was noted by our workers’ compensation insurance carrier as a best practice to share with other organizations,” Kerry added about this creative and talented DSP!



Alyssa Shoun
2017 Tennessee
DSP of the Year



Congratulations!

Congratulations
Jason Pasley
DSP Of The Year

State of Illinois



Thank You
for your
support, advocacy, &
years of dedication



Congratulations
Jeanne
Baughman

IOWA

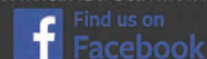
Direct Support Professional of the Year

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Congratulations, Wende Tyler
Maine DSP of the Year



OHI is inspired by Wende Tyler, an incredible Direct Support Professional! She makes a profound difference in the lives of all the people she supports!!

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Congratulations

Cristina Gregoire

North Dakota's DSP of the Year

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***Congratulations,
Gerson Ortiz!***
Pennsylvania DSP of the Year 2017



Access Services is incredibly proud to join ANCOR in recognizing your outstanding passion, creativity, and dedication. So many individuals stand taller, feel stronger, and challenge their own limitations because of your inspiration. Congratulations on this well-deserved honor!

We appreciate that you value making a difference in people's lives!



Congratulations, Michael Washington!



**District of Columbia's DSP
of the Year for 2017!**

Congratulations Christie Lacefield!



2017 ANCOR DSP of the Year for Virginia

On behalf of the people we support and our board of directors, we are honored that ANCOR has chosen you as Virginia's Direct Support Professional of the year! We are so proud of your commitment to our mission and your compassion for the people we support.



Hope House Foundation provides services to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities exclusively in their own homes or apartments — regardless of how complex their disabilities may be.

Congratulations Wendy Herringshaw

New York ANCOR DSP of the Year

Arc Herkimer's Direct Support Professionals are the heart and soul of our organization and they define our agency's quality in every interaction.

Wendy is an outstanding staff member, who supports personal choice to determine what is important to individuals. She then assists them in choosing the services and supports needed to help achieve life goals. She diligently works each day to fulfill our mission of empowering people with disabilities and enriching lives throughout our community. We are grateful for her dedication.



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Congratulations Veronica!



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Veronica Rotaru - Moldova's 2017 DSP

Congratulations Nikki Koontz!

Montana DSP of the Year



Opportunity Resources would like to thank Nikki for her hard work, compassion, and dedication in making a difference in the lives of those we support. We couldn't do it without you Nikki!



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Congratulations and Thank You *Molly Hammitt*



ANCOR's 2017 Direct Support
Professional of the Year
for the State of South Dakota

Thank You, you are an
amazing Direct Support Professional.

The impact you make on people's lives can't be
measured, our deepest appreciation for all you do.

Thank you from your co-workers, the people you
support, and the entire SESDAC family.

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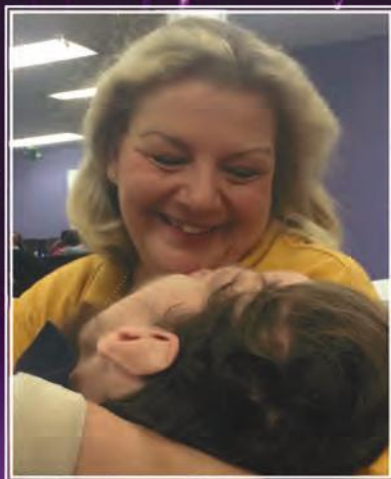
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Betsy Byrnes

Kentucky DSP of the Year

Thank you for 18
caring years in
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CONGRATULATIONS BILL LEWIS! 2017 MARYLAND DSP OF THE YEAR

For helping so many at New Horizons reach their goals and potential. We are so proud of your dedication and honored by your commitment to those we serve.

You are truly a model DSP!



DSP Bill Lewis (right) with Kevin (left) at the Smithsonian's American History Museum in Washington, DC.


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Congratulations!

ANCOR's 2017 Mississippi DSP of the Year Recipient



Tanya Croy, REM Mississippi

The MENTOR Network thanks **Tanya Croy**
for her hard work and dedication to enhancing
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The MENTOR Network salutes all nominees
and recipients of ANCOR's 2017
Direct Support Professional of the Year Award.

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Forrest Austin
ANCOR's 2017 **National** DSP of the Year!



We could not be more proud of your hard work and dedication as a community employment job coach and leader of our Project SEARCH program. You are creative, focused on outcomes, a strong advocate for those we serve and a leader in our organization. We can't wait to see what you do next!

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