

Recognizing Excellence 2020

Honoring 2020's class of outstanding direct support professionals



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The ANCOR 2020 DSP of the Year Awards are proudly underwritten by Relias.

Thank You, DSPs!

A letter from ANCOR CEO Barbara Merrill & Board of Directors President Robert Budd



Barbara Merrill
CEO



Robert Budd
President

The COVID-19 pandemic that has defined 2020 has shined a light on who's excluded when our nation is forced to consider which professionals in our economy are considered *essential*. Direct support professionals do it all: they're health care workers, they're caregivers, they're community navigators and, sometimes, they're crisis counselors.

Never before has the value of our direct support workforce been more clearly on display, which makes now the perfect time to recognize the excellence of this workforce with the presentation of ANCOR's annual DSP of the Year awards. This year, our judging panel had the impossible task of selecting these 55 professionals from 300 nominations to receive a 2020 DSP of the Year award.

From implementing new technologies to providing a stronger foundation for employment and independent living, to self-innovating methods of personalized communication, the stories profiled in this publication inspire and empower. And while each story is unique, one thread unites: each and every DSP honored this year delivers tailored, person-centered supports, remaining relentless in the quest to include, support and empower.

We are so pleased to invite you to read these outstanding professionals' stories. We hope you'll take a moment to congratulate them, and the other outstanding DSPs in your life. We also hope you'll join us in thanking ANCOR Diamond Partner Relias, without whose support the DSP of the Year awards would not be possible.

On behalf of the entire ANCOR community: THANK YOU, DSPs!

Sincerely,
Barbara Merrill
CEO, ANCOR

Robert Budd
President, ANCOR Board of Directors

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These DSP Award Winners embody Mosaic's values:
Belonging. Connection. Faithfulness. Grit.

We're proud to have them represent our thousands of outstanding and committed Direct Support Professionals across Mosaic's 10-state network.



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CONGRATULATIONS

to Mosaic's six

2020 DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL AWARD RECIPIENTS

State Winners



Hannah Mungai
ARIZONA



Lisa Buhning
COLORADO



Sander Lopez
CONNECTICUT



Michelle Westbrook
DELAWARE

Tenet Winners



Danielle Ruggiero
PERSON-
CENTEREDNESS



Kayann Stewart
INNOVATION

Eligio Velasquez

2020 National DSP of the Year



ELIGIO VELASQUEZ

- ARCA
- Albuquerque, NM
- 26 years as a DSP

Eligio Velasquez, who has spent all 26 of his years in the profession with ARCA, manages a group home where three men with intellectual and developmental disabilities live. These men are able to live in the community, rather than being institutionalized, thanks to the support of Velasquez and his colleagues at ARCA.

According to his nomination, Velasquez has excelled in tailoring the services he delivers to the unique needs of the people he supports. When he observed Bob, one of the men he supports, conversing with someone at a community function using American Sign Language (ASL), for example, Velasquez realized that Bob was far from “nonverbal” as once suspected.

Velasquez quickly began researching programs for people with hearing disabilities, secured an ASL interpreter to attend the individual's medical appointments, and coordinated with staff to identify new avenues for the individual to communicate.

"Eligio's dedication to person-centered supports was life-changing for Bob, who finally had the ability to express his long-time dreams," Velasquez's nomination letter stated. "Eligio was instrumental in creating an environment for Bob to communicate and be understood." The nomination letter also noted that Velasquez's own struggle with dyslexia has been instrumental in his drive to deliver person-centered supports that help people with diverse abilities find their voices.

As ANCOR CEO Barbara Merrill put it, we co-present the DSP of the Year awards each year "precisely because of people like Eligio. His commitment to ensuring the inclusion of people supported by ARCA enriches not only the lives of those individuals, but the broader Albuquerque community at large."

Congratulations

to our 2020 Direct Support Professionals of the Year!
Thank you for helping people live their best life every day!



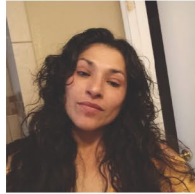
John Cunningham
Michigan



Carmen Dowler
West Virginia



Tim Flesner
Nebraska



Luisa Gallegos
Texas



Jennifer Houle
International



Daytona Irvin
Louisiana



Marquita Moore
Virginia



Judy Saffold
Florida



Rebecca Santos
California



Jodi Tofstad
Washington



Charlin Viera
Leadership

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Jennifer Houle

2020 International DSP of the Year



JENNIFER HOULE

- BrightSpring Ontario
- Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada
- 17 years as a DSP

Jenn promotes person-centered supports by getting to know each of the individuals with whom she works, including their likes, dislikes and the special things they enjoy doing. She then incorporates this knowledge into her daily interactions with the people she supports, using functional and leisure activities to engage people in the development of and progress toward their own goals.

Jenn is a dedicated DSP and a consistent source of positive energy at the program. She brings joy to her job, and therefore to the daily lives of the people she supports!

Kayann Stewart

Special Category Award: Innovation

Technology has been an increasingly important part of programs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Recently, Kayann's program received a grant from the state to help increase independence through the use of technology.

Kayann jumped at the opportunity, helping her program implement and utilize smart speakers, health trackers, sensors, timers and other devices. This has given the people she supports a new sense of independence, and enables staff to monitor people without interfering in their lives.



KAYANN STEWART

- Mosaic
- Manchester, CT
- 15 years as a DSP

Charlin Quiñones Viera

Special Category Award: Leadership



**CHARLIN QUIÑONES
VIERA**

- BrightSpring Florida
- Ocala, FL
- 12 years as a DSP

Charlin, a natural leader and problem-solver, excels at guiding and motivating other members of the team. She has a knack for easily identifying and proposing solutions to any problems that the team encounters. Charlin is the lead trainer for her shifts and ensures that all new employees understand their roles as DSPs.

Not only does Charlin possess the leadership skills needed for a team leader, she also has the behind-the-scenes skills required to improve the care of the individuals she supports and ensure that procedures are implemented. She approached management to suggest a break schedule for her shift, which helped balance the staffing ratio that ensures people have uninterrupted support at all times.

Jesse Means

Special Category Award: Leadership

Jesse's reputation as a trainer is renowned, and others see him as a professional who walks the talk. He is also an outside-the-box thinker who works hard to come up with solutions that enable other staff and the people he supports step outside their comfort zones or cope with difficult situations.

In addition to being an agency trainer, Jesse serves as a Vision Planner, is a DSP Instructor and lives as the Apartment Adviser in an Independent Living Program. The Apartment Adviser is responsible for monitoring general health and safety of the people supported, and for modeling neighborly behavior, assuring community connections and peer-to-peer problem solving.



JESSE MEANS

- Mobius, Inc.
- Damariscotta, ME
- 12 years as a DSP

Surmsuk Koonvisal

Special Category Award: NADSP Tenets



**SURMSUK
KOONVISAL**

- Sunrise Community
- Miami, FL
- 16 years as a DSP

Nuni, as she is known, models appropriate social interactions that are warm, charming, lovely and satisfying. She interacts with the families of the people she supports and has helped them gain a deeper understanding of their loved one's hopes and dreams, and the obstacles that might stand in the way.

Nuni works with individuals who sometimes experience interpersonal conflicts, and she mediates these conflicts with an eye toward helping them to gain the skills needed to resolve conflict in a positive, affirming way. She always tries to provide the least amount of assistance possible so the individuals become independent and build positive relationships.

Kevin Kickert

Special Category Award: NADSP Tenets

Kevin knows that one of the biggest obstacles for a young man he supports is overcoming nervousness when meeting new people. The young man will be graduating high school soon and worries about how he will maintain connections with old friends and make new ones.

In response, Kevin encourages him to engage with new people by starting conversations through humor, and to build the courage to attend parties. This isn't a formal goal in his personal support plan, but rather a life lesson being taught by a man who sees the full potential of the people he supports. And every single day, Kevin does everything in his power to support people to achieve their full potential.



KEVIN KICKERT

- Dungarvin
- Columbus, OH
- 11 years as a DSP



Vincent Whitaker
North Carolina



Sandee Alexander
Indiana



Cristanie Maxelix
New Jersey



Oma Houston
Ohio



Donna Koscher
Oklahoma



Sherrie Threadgill
Oregon



Kevin Kickert
NADSP Tenet Award Winner
Ohio

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Winning DSPs

shining light into the lives of
those we serve



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Brittany Rush

Special Category Award: Relationships



BRITTANY RUSH

- Delta Community Supports, Inc.
- Levittown, PA
- 12 years as a DSP

Brittany has developed a patient, attentive approach to working with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Working with people who had demonstrated combative behaviors with family members or other staff in the past, Brittany uses patience and insight to gain the trust of these individuals and eventually encourage remarkable behavioral transformations.

With careful guidance and support, Brittany helped one individual she supports learn about the importance of regular health care visits and understand the impact of better health on her desire to take charge of her life. The individual now stays up-to-date on medical visits and can regularly venture out into the community to build new friendships and live a quality life.

Markeita Meeks

Special Category Award: Relationships

Markeita supports a woman who depends on others for physical care and mobility. The woman loves hanging out with "the girls," so Markeita helps her plan events to meet up with friends throughout the week.

Markeita also supports the woman with scheduling and meeting friends in the community: at Dave & Buster's, the bowling alley, movie theaters and other fun places. Markeita also helped this individual set up and maintain a Facebook page to plan events via the social network. She now posts pictures of the places they've been and things they've done to keep friends up-to-date on their busy social life!



MARKEITA MEEKS

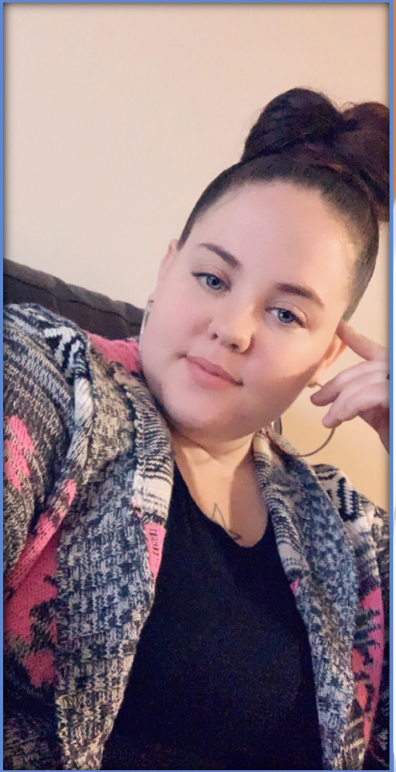
- Sunrise Community of Maryland, Inc.
- Fort Washington, MD
- 4 years as a DSP

Danielle Ruggiero

Special Category Award: Person-Centered Supports

Danielle supports an individual who moved from an institution into their very first home in the community. Initially, the individual was very aggressive and afraid, and often physically violent. Danielle worked with the individual every day, determined to show kindness in the face of aggression. Danielle attended a person-centered plan meeting with a list of items the individual needed to be successful.

After the meeting, she asked her team for 90 days to work with the individual and help them acclimate. The team agreed and got her the tools she needed, including an iPad Danielle used to help the person communicate their needs. Thanks in part to Danielle's unwavering commitment, the person now lives independently in the community.



**DANIELLE
RUGGERIO**

- Mosaic
- Wilmington, DE
- 3 years as a DSP

Telease Davis

2020 Alabama DSP of the Year

Telease Davis has an outgoing personality that exhibits a level of care for each of the people she supports. She is highly involved with each person she works with and engages with them on a one-on-one level that makes it easy to identify their wants and needs, even when, like everyone else, they sometimes struggle to express themselves. Telease engages with each person she supports in a way that displays her utmost respect for them.

Everyone that lives in the home where Telease works in has a unique relationship with her, enabling them to live an enhanced and more meaningful life.



TELEASE DAVIS

- Resources for Independence
- Tuscaloosa, AL
- 28 years as a DSP

changing lives

one person at a time

At Sunrise, we believe that all people have the right to a full and productive life – to have a home, a family and a job. For more than 50 years, we have been creating valued lives for people with disabilities. We minimize the challenges in their lives and ensure that the individualized supports and services provided build on their strengths, interest and needs. At Sunrise, we empower the people we support and help them overcome obstacles so they can achieve their goals – to find their rightful place within the community. We're changing lives... One person at a time.

www.sunrisegroup.org



Congratulations Telease Davis

Winner of the 2020 Alabama Direct Support Professional of the Year Award



Telease Davis

Sunrise Community of Alabama, Inc.

Telease Davis is a true advocate for people with developmental disabilities. She has worked as a Direct Support Professional for 28 years, 15 of which have been dedicated to Sunrise. Telease is passionate about providing quality care for the persons she supports on a daily basis and makes sure that each person, for whom she cares, has the

individualized support needed to reach their personal goals.

Telease Davis is an extrovert and her energetic personality is clearly visible as she interacts with each individual. Telease works diligently with men and women with varying abilities and their respective families, to ensure progress is made on a daily basis.

There is no doubt that Telease is a dedicated Direct Support Professional with admirable work ethics and consistently demonstrates leadership ability in bringing everyone together to reach a common goal.

Congratulations Markeita Meeks Winner of the 2020 Direct Support Professional of the Year Tenet Award for Relationships



Markeita Meeks
Sunrise Community of Maryland, Inc.

Markeita Meeks has been working with people with developmental disabilities for nearly four years. During that time, she has distinguished herself as an exceptional Direct Support Professional. Markeita provides support to numerous individuals and is keenly aware of each person's needs. Some of the people Markeita assists have serious physical

challenges, and she always goes above and beyond to make a difference in every aspect of their daily routines. She is an integral part of their lives and treats everyone with dignity and respect.

Markeita forges strong bonds with the people she provides care to and has the ability to make people feel truly special. She is an inspiring leader that displays initiative with peers and coworkers and is a true joy to be around.

Markeita is one the most patient and compassionate people working at Sunrise Community of Maryland. She is an outstanding woman that endeavors to ensure that people with varying abilities are treated fairly and justly while helping them find their rightful place within the community.

Congratulations Surmsuk Koonvisal Winner of the 2020 Florida Direct Support Professional of the Year for NADSP Tenets Award



Surmsuk "Nuni" Koonvisal
Sunrise Community, Inc.

Surmsuk "Nuni" Koonvisal has supported people with physical and intellectual challenges for 16 years; all of them with Sunrise. Nuni has the incredible ability to build warm, nurturing relationships with the individuals she supports. She is especially remarkable when caring for individuals who have behavioral challenges. With patience, love and effective

communication, Nuni has developed meaningful friendships with the people for whom she cares and successfully helps them achieve their goals for independence and community integration. She has impacted countless individuals with intellectual and physical challenges and has played a key role in enriching their lives.

Nuni embodies the Sunrise mission. She is a unique individual and as a lead Direct Support Professional, works tirelessly to assist individuals with disabilities achieve their hopes and dreams.

www.sunrisegroup.org



Gena Coleman

2020 Alaska DSP of the Year

Gena brings out the best in the people she lives with, the people she works with and the people she supports. She assures that people can live the life they choose, even if that life is a little extraordinary.

Gena even makes life at 20 degrees below zero seem cozy! Everybody deserves to live in the community of their choice, even if that community is off the beaten path.



GENA COLEMAN

- Hope Community Resources
- Willow, AK
- 20 years as a DSP

Hannah Mungai

2020 Arizona DSP of the Year

Never letting fear get in the way, Hannah has worked with the women she supports to help them unlock much more of what life has to offer. By focusing on people as individuals, Hannah has been able to help those she supports grow in the community. The connection and trust between Hannah and the people she supports has made all the difference.

Hannah has demonstrated what true connection can do for people in community. Due to her dedication — and the hard work of the women she supports — they have been able to reach new heights and live life to the fullest.



**HANNAH
MUNGAI**

- Mosaic
- Phoenix, AZ
- 3 years as a DSP

Rebecca Santos

2020 California DSP of the Year



REBECCA SANTOS

- BrightSpring California
- San Diego, CA
- 11 years as a DSP

Before she met Rebecca, one of the women she went on to support used a wheelchair and had no walking program planned. As a result, she stayed in her wheelchair during all waking hours. When Rebecca realized that the woman would walk a handful of steps with her father when he came to visit, Rebecca worked with the individual to develop a walking goal.

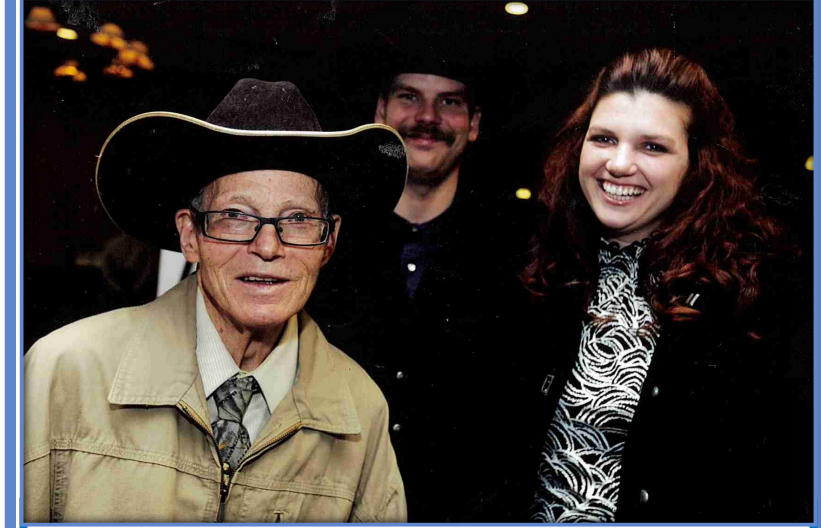
Rebecca started by walking with the woman from the front door of the house to her bus once or twice a week. Day by day, the individual's ability to walk improved. Five months later, she was walking two blocks almost every day! Her life has been transformed, in large part because of Rebecca's support, and she can now engage in her local community.

Lisa Buhring

2020 Colorado DSP of the Year

Lisa's impressive ability to problem-solve helps people with disabilities plan for their future. She focuses on each individual and their family's vision of what they would like to do and achieve in the future. For example, Lisa helped someone she supports make friends in the community by joining a billiards league with him.

Lisa is a dedicated provider who exemplifies person-centeredness and stands as a testament to the power of love and care. As Lisa always says, "Caregiving often calls us to lean into love we didn't know was possible."



LISA BUHRING

- Mosaic
- Colorado Springs, CO
- 20 years as a DSP

Sander Lopez

2020 Connecticut DSP of the Year



SANDER LOPEZ

- Mosaic
- Oakdale, CT
- 10 years as a DSP

Sander makes sure the people he supports are happy and live a great life. Whether he's helping them bake a cake, turning on music and dancing in the living room, or joining them on a run to the store, he shows love and compassion. Sander's approach has decreased the frequency of many behavioral challenges in the home where he works, because the people who live there know they come first, and that Sander listens to and respects them.

Sander exemplifies the best characteristics of a great DSP. He ensures people's needs are met, medications are ordered, supplies are in stock and activities are successful—all while maintaining an enthusiasm that gets the people he supports to smile every day.

Michelle Westbrook

2020 Delaware DSP of the Year

Michelle does whatever it takes to provide a life full of possibilities for the people she supports. After supporting one individual to live a healthier lifestyle and secure employment, Michelle wasn't done. While continuing to ask the individual what he wanted in life, she discovered he had been estranged from his family. Michelle helped him communicate with and coordinate a reunion with his sister.

Michelle also provides coaching, feedback and training to the other DSPs she works with, as well as incoming DSPs. For everyone who works with her, Michelle is an invaluable colleague!



**MICHELLE
WESTBROOK**

- Mosaic
- Wilmington, DE
- 2 years as a DSP

Jason McGaughey

2020 District of Columbia DSP of the Year

Jason has been a thoughtful and passionate DSP for over 10 years. His commitment to making a positive impact in the lives of people in his community—both professionally and personally—is boundless.

Jason is an accomplished social justice activist. His tireless work outside of our agency keeps him grounded and guided. Locally, he has testified at city council in support of the DSP Rate Act, which was legislation to help raise wages for DSPs in DC. He has also testified on Capitol Hill at a briefing organized by ANCOR. Anyone who hears Jason speak knows the passion he has about the people he supports and his fellow DSPs.



JASON McGAUGHEY

- RCM of Washington
- Washington, DC
- 11 years as a DSP

Judy Saffold

2020 Florida DSP of the Year

Judy identifies person-centered goals for each of the people she supports. When one individual appeared sad whenever she was in her bedroom, Judy helped her redesign her bedroom. Judy brought in paint samples, the individual chose a favorite, and together, they picked out new decorations. Your bedroom should be a sanctuary, and thanks to Judy's support, the woman she supports now has a bedroom that brings her joy.

Judy used the same person-centered approach to help others redesign and personalize their bedrooms. This is a shining example of how she preserves the dignity of everyone she supports and ensures that their dreams and desires come first.



JUDY SAFFOLD

- BrightSpring Florida
- Clearwater, FL
- 40 years as a DSP



Goodlife wants to thank all DSPs for making a meaningful difference in the everyday lives of persons with disabilities. We appreciate all you do.

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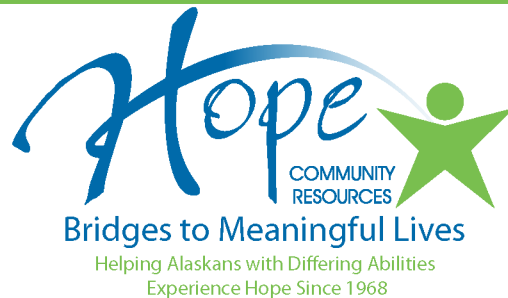
GENA COLEMAN

2020 National DSP of the Year



Alaska thanks Gena for over 23 years of making “magic” out of ordinary days. Gena’s strength is her ability to integrate people into their communities, remove barriers to fuller, interesting, and meaningful lives.

All of us at Hope are honored to work with Gena, an exceptional person who works with integrity and pride every day, mentoring those around her to do the same.



CONGRATULATIONS, JASON MCGAUGHEY

2020 DISTRICT OF
COLUMBIA DIRECT
SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL
OF THE YEAR



Carla Garrison-Greene

2020 Georgia DSP of the Year

When an individual Carla supports expressed that they wanted to be President, Carla used the upcoming Residents Council election to launch an all-out campaign. This included photoshoots, posters, door-to-door canvassing and campaign rallies. Carla even secured a voting booth to transform her office into a polling place.

But Carla didn't stop there: she then used this as an opportunity to educate others supported by RHA Health Services on the voting process and provide them with the full voting experience. The experience also inspired Carla to speak at the Georgia Capitol to advocate for fair wages for DSPs, where her testimony received a standing ovation from the panel.



**CARLA GARRISON-
GREENE**

- RHA Health Services, LLC
- Augusta, GA
- 18 years as a DSP

Joshua Grade

2020 Idaho DSP of the Year

"I believe by showing sincerity, you're allowing the individual to be open because they see you really care," says Josh. "I am open to talking about all areas of relationship and then normalize how they feel so they are safe to express their thoughts and feelings." This person-centered approach and relationship cultivation is key to helping the people Jason supports thrive.

Josh strives to relate to and connect with the individuals so they can progress in their own unique ways. In addition, Joshua runs a training group for direct care staff to help them identify and implement new and advanced techniques to help them connect better with the people his colleagues supports.



JOSHUA GRADE

- Consumer Direct Care Network
- Boise, ID
- 8 years as a DSP

Jacquelyn Anderson

2020 Illinois DSP of the Year



**JACQUELYN
ANDERSON**

- Trinity Services
- New Lenox, IL
- 12 years as a DSP

Jacquelyn helps the people she supports achieve their goals. She studies written plans and helps people orchestrate the activities they want. She is a dedicated DSP who finds creative ways to connect with people to help them maximize their independence, understand abstract concepts and practical skills, have positive social interactions and experience new things.

Jacquelyn is a passionate advocate who explores legislative opportunities to better the lives of people with disabilities and the DSPs who support them. Some of these efforts include writing letters, making phone calls and mailing postcards to lawmakers to help secure funding for these much-needed services.

Sandee Alexander

2020 Indiana DSP of the Year

Sandee's emphasis on developing connections encourages the individuals she supports to be more independent and achieve their personal goals. Sandee teaches the people she supports to utilize their coping skills to decrease targeted behaviors, advocate for themselves and work toward greater independence.

Sandee has supported people in the home where she works to obtain paying jobs in the community, which in turn enables them to be more included in their community.



SANDEE ALEXANDER

- Dungarvin
- South Bend, IN
- 3 years as a DSP

RHA is Proud to Congratulate Carla Garrison-Greene

ANCOR's 2020 Georgia DSP of the Year



Carla Garrison-Greene, Augusta, GA

“Our world would
be a better place if
there were more
people that focused
the kind of energy
that Carla does on
helping others
reach their dreams!”

– Tonya Self, RHA IDD
Administrator



congrats!



IOWA'S

DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL
OF THE YEAR

Trang Conrad

Exceptional Persons, Inc.



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IOWA DSP OF THE YEAR!

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CELEBRATING
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BAUMAN**

*Kentucky Association of Private Providers
DSP of the year*

ANCDR Kentucky
DSP of the year

Congratulations to you and all the winners .

Therap congratulates all DSPs for their endless dedication to the people they support

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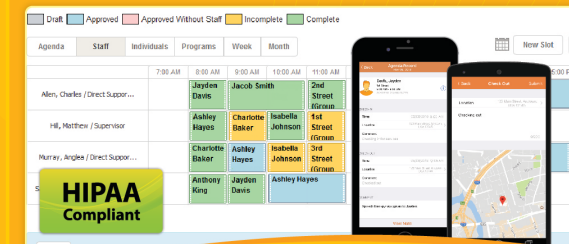
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Trang 'Chu' Conrad

2020 Iowa DSP of the Year



TRANG 'CHU' CONRAD

- Exceptional Persons, Inc.
- Waterloo, IA
- 24 years as a DSP

Chu saved the life of a person she supports by continuing to advocate for them following a fall, even after paramedics claimed there was no need for a hospital visit. Chu took it upon herself to drive the individual to the hospital where they were found to need treatment in the ICU.

Chu is a fierce advocate for everyone she works with—whether it's to get a medical referral or medication change. Chu also constantly looks for ways people can get out into and enjoy the community. It's important to her that new staff learn person-centered supports. Chu leads by example and encourages staff to listen, follow through and genuinely show they care.

Jessa Molina

2020 Kansas DSP of the Year

Jessa has demonstrated advocacy in her community on behalf the people she supports by seeking out opportunities to educate schools, businesses and civic organizations about the contributions that people with disabilities can make in the workplace when they have access to the right supports.

Jessa remains focused on the goal of developing opportunities for competitive employment and creating a community of employers who value diversity in their workforce. She is innovative and inspires the individuals she supports to achieve their personal goals. She has helped create a brighter future for people with disabilities—a future defined by empowerment and independence.

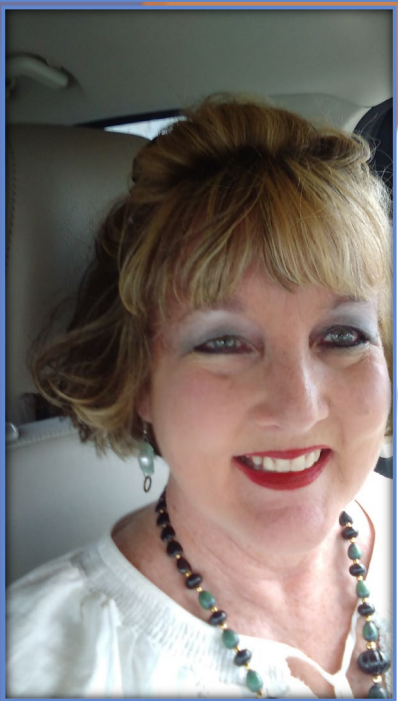


JESSA MOLINA

- Johnson County Developmental Supports
- Lenexa, KS
- 3 years as a DSP

Cheryl Bauman

2020 Kentucky DSP of the Year



**CHERYL
BAUMAN**

- Tri-Generations Louisville
- Louisville, KY
- 10 years as a DSP

Along with relationship building, Cheryl sneaks in self-confidence, purpose and self- advocacy whenever supporting people at home and in the community. She encourages confidence-building through photo shoots that empower people to envision themselves as models. She supported one individual to advocate for themselves by attending and directing their annual team meeting—which was held without a family member for the first time this year.

This was a big step on the road to independence. As a result, the individual is no longer meekly agrees to others' goals, but asserts their own. This growth has motivated the individual to become a registered voter who now diligently keeps informed ahead of every opportunity to vote.

Daytona Irvin

2020 Louisiana DSP of the Year

Daytona Irvin's nomination letter says it all: "Daytona saved an individual's life. She was doing a random visit to the day program when an individual who was eating lunch began choking on their food. Without panicking, Daytona immediately applied the skills she learned and used the Dechoker to dislodge the food. Daytona was also able to [calm others] who were frantic about the situation."

This individual is alive today thanks to her knowledge and calm demeanor in a chaotic and potentially horrific situation. Daytona's care and capability have allowed her to build strong relationships with the individuals she supports and the staff she works with.



DAYTONA IRVIN

- BrightSpring Louisiana
- Lafayette, LA
- 9 years as a DSP



The John F. Murphy Homes, Inc.

John F. Murphy Homes congratulates
KATIE PULK



on being named
Maine's 2020 DSP of the Year

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Together we have a stake in building opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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Katie Pulk

2020 Maine DSP of the Year



KATIE PULK

- John F. Murphy Homes
- Auburn, ME
- 6 years as a DSP

An individual Katie supports expressed a desire to visit 'America's Most Beloved Ballpark.' Saving enough money for a trip to Fenway Park in Boston was a challenge, but not challenge is too big for Katie. She supported the individual to develop a detailed savings schedule. The individual stuck to the spending program, and it eventually paid off: they visited Fenway Park, ate at the famous Bleacher Bar restaurant, and took a complete tour of the stadium.

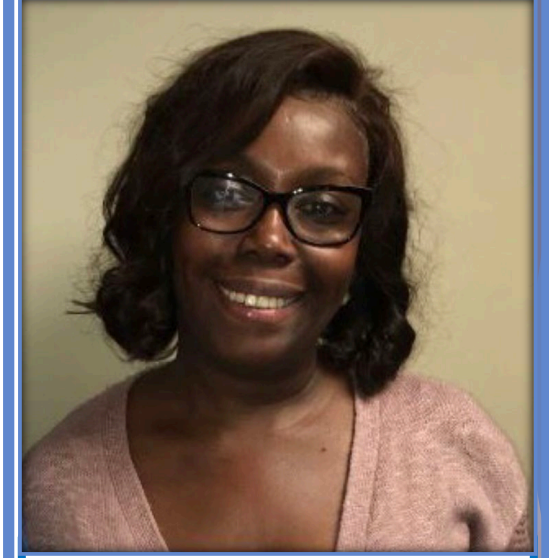
Katie's sincere dedication to the people she supports can be seen by all, the depth of which is revealed through her relationships with them. Her ability to put their thoughts, choices and feelings first is what person-centeredness is all about.

Marie Bonnet

2020 Maryland DSP of the Year

Marie noticed that someone she supports often felt isolated and trapped within herself and her fears, which resulted in uncomfortable behavioral symptoms. After learning that loud noises were a trigger, Marie focused on supporting the individual to find uncrowded places. One day at a community garden, Marie noticed the individual was watching someone water plants, and asked if they could give it a try.

The individual relished the calming spray of the water and took pride in nourishing the flowers and vegetables. They now work together at the garden center five days a week. Marie's patience, kindness and caring helps support people of all abilities to lead lives of inclusion.



MARIE BONNET

- SEEC
- Silver Spring, MD
- 9 years as a DSP

Julian Cadavid

2020 Massachusetts DSP of the Year



JULIAN CADAVID

- WCI - Work, Community, Independence
- Waltham, MA
- 5 years as a DSP

Julian supports individuals with support needs who often demonstrate aggression towards him, other peers and staff. His ability to remain calm and to maintain needed boundaries is critical in his daily interactions. By treating Individuals with respect, speaking to them calmly and listening to their needs, Julian models for people in the community how our neighbors with disabilities deserve to be treated.

Despite having a hearing disability, one individual Julian works with maintains a steady job due to Julian's innovation. He taught them how to use an iPhone to reach program staff when needed and to leverage FaceTime to communicate using notes and gestures so they can work independently.

John Cunningham

2020 Michigan DSP of the Year

One goal for every person supported by John's organization is for them to know which medications they take, how much they take, and why. John created a crossword puzzle-style tool with photos and a list of each person's medication(s) to help them memorize their routines. A year later, this tool is used widely, and everyone John supports knows most, if not all, of their medications by name, dose and photo.

John also makes sure the individuals he supports are living full and complete lives. When needed, he goes on week-long vacations with people so they can attend family reunions, baby showers, birthday parties or whatever else they desire.



**JOHN
CUNNINGHAM**

- BrightSpring
Michigan
- Milan, MI
- 5 years as a DSP

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Delta Community Supports Congratulates Our Own

Brittany Rush

**Selected as the 2020 Direct Support
Professional of the Year Tenet Award Winner for Relationships**

Award Presented by ANCOR, The American Network of Community Options and Resources.

“Congratulations! We are pleased to inform you that Brittany Rush has been selected to receive the 2020 Direct Support Professional of the Year Tenet Award for Relationships. Tenet awards focus on one aspect of the nomination that particularly stood out to the judging panel. Brittany was selected for recognition from among hundreds of nominations, and this award serves as a testament to Brittany’s work to support individuals in the community and to your leadership at Delta Community Supports.”

— ANCOR Award Statement

Congratulations to Brittany from all of us at Delta Community Supports!



The Delta Community Supports Mission:
To enrich the lives of individuals and families through outstanding community-based supports and mutually rewarding relationships.

Molly Halls

2020 Minnesota DSP of the Year



MOLLY HALLS

- Laura Baker Services Association
- Northfield, MN
- 13 years as a DSP

Molly is known for outside-the-box strategies that work well for the people she supports. At one house, she instituted a weekly 'Foster Friday,' in which she brings in dogs and other animals she's fostering on her farm to visit and interact with the people she supports.

Molly has a gift of tuning into the needs and interests of people she supports to determine what tools she can use to help them achieve their goals. She then uses kindness and persistence to help transform those goals into reality. Her professionalism, kindness and determination directs her approach to delivering high-quality services, and her commitment to strengthening other staff and the organization.

Lakisha Stewart

2020 Mississippi DSP of the Year

Lakisha has been personally influenced by her brother, who has an intellectual disability. As a result of their relationship, Lakisha strives to meet the specific, individualized needs of each person she supports. Because of her strong relationships with the people she supports, Lakisha uses their history together to explore new ways of improving quality of life.

Lakisha is known as “Ladybug” because she quietly goes about her day emulating the qualities of a person-focused DSP. Her passive yet successful approach enables those she supports to be as independent as possible, without the feeling that someone is watching over or do things for them.



LAKISHA STEWART

- REM Mississippi
- Hattiesburg, MS
- 9 years as a DSP

Kim Boden

2020 Missouri DSP of the Year



KIM BODEN

- Life Unlimited
- Kansas City, MO
- 8 years as a DSP

Kim supports an individual whose phone number changed several times due to multiple relocations. She noticed the individual was down because they hadn't received any phone calls. Because multiple moves left the person struggling to remember their phone number, they couldn't give it out to people they had befriended in the community. Kim's innovative thinking led her to create business cards for the people she supports to give to friends.

Kim's experience and natural, instinctive abilities guide her to create a respectful, inclusive and familial atmosphere among the people she supports. She encourages new opportunities and experiences, choice, individual empowerment and self-advocacy at every turn.

Tim Flesner

2020 Nebraska DSP of the Year

An individual Tim supports is an avid fan of WWE wrestling. Unfortunately, this person had not been allowed to watch WWE for many years because they would attempt to emulate moves, including threatening to hit others with chairs. With support from Tim, who redirected the person's passion toward a goal of attending a live wrestling event instead of mimicking violent behaviors, the individual can once again watch WWE.

Tim has cultivated bonds with the individuals he supports and their families, which has led to a deeper and richer quality of life. His person-centeredness and advocacy makes a world of difference.



TIM FLESNER

- BrightSpring
Nebraska
- Lincoln, NE
- 15 years as a DSP

Shane Gifford

2020 Nevada DSP of the Year



SHANE GIFFORD

- Chrysalis
- Reno, NV
- 1 year as a DSP

Shane encourages the two people in the home where he works to do the things that they want to do. The team had no idea that one of the individuals wanted to go to Disneyland and a Dodgers game. Shane not only discovered this goal, but also helped the person plan and achieve these goals.

Shane uses a creative approach with the individuals he supports who are estranged from their families. He coordinates celebrations of holidays, birthdays and other events year-around that encompass a family dynamic in the home. He is always willing to listen to the wants and needs of the people he supports, and he works to make every day special.

Christanie Maxelix

2020 New Jersey DSP of the Year

Christanie exemplifies person-centered supports. Not only has she advocated for people she supports in achieving their personal goals of being able to communicate, gain weight or maintain relationships with their families—she also mentors staff to ensure they understand the importance of person-centered, goal-oriented supports.

Christanie has dedicated her life to bettering the lives of people with disabilities. Her person-centered approach cultivates dynamic and fruitful lives for the people she supports.



CHRISTANIE MAXELIX

- Dungarvin
- Piscataway, NJ
- 20 years as a DSP

Congratulations, Molly Halls, for being recognized as a Direct Support Professional of the Year!



*Thank you for your dedication to bringing the power
of possibility to people with special needs.*



LAURA BAKER
SERVICES ASSOCIATION

laurabaker.org

THANK YOU!



KIM BODEN

*"Kim epitomizes leadership
through her honesty, integrity,
communication skills, accountability,
and an overall drive of passion. She is
committed to inspiring others and
empowering them to reach
their full potential."*

— Tena O'Hara, —
Training Specialist
Life Unlimited

Missouri Direct Support Professional of the Year



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Chase Painter

2020 New Mexico DSP of the Year



CHASE PAINTER

- ARCA
- Albuquerque, NM
- 3 years as a DSP

Chase is committed to person-centered supports and enjoys finding ways to utilize people's unique strengths. His keen attention during the discovery process enables him to help people realize maximum independence. Chase learns about a person's hobbies and interests, which helps him to identify job opportunities the person may never have thought of themselves.

To achieve successful workplace outcomes, Chase actively promotes reciprocal professional relationships between individuals and employers. Chase consistently challenges himself to find innovative means to help people he supports develop the skills and achieve their dreams.

Andrew McNamara

2020 New York DSP of the Year

Andy's guidance has helped a person he supports develop the courage to leave the house, allowed another to enjoy a behavior-free vacation and calmed a person in an acutely stressful situation. Each had their individual behaviors and ways of coping, and in every situation, Andy patiently worked with the people experiencing these situations in the areas where they were struggling. His ability to establish relationships with the people he supports contributes to their life's successes.

Andy often says, "You can't support a person, without that person." Such a simple statement truly exemplifies Andy's approach to person-centered supports.



**ANDREW
McNAMARA**

- Heritage Christian Services
- Rochester, NY
- 7 years as a DSP

Vincent Whitaker

2020 North Carolina DSP of the Year



VINCENT WHITAKER

- Dungarvin
- Garner, NC
- 2 years as a DSP

Vincent makes it his responsibility to find out what the people he supports like and dislike. He looks beyond disability and focuses on people's hopes, dreams and aspirations. Vincent ensures he knows and understands people's abilities, and supports and assists every individual in any way possible.

One individual he supported always wanted to have his own podcast or radio show. Vincent not only supported this individual to do have their own show, but also took the extra step of helping them become part of a local college radio program. This individualized support helped transform a dream into a reality—and a lifelong hobby.

Sammie Haider

2020 North Dakota DSP of the Year

Sammie always finds ways to enhance people's experiences by developing new methods to meet their needs. When one person's speech enhancement device malfunctioned, Sammie used online instructional videos to learn how to repair it herself. She then made the instructions available for rest of the staff, should they find themselves in similar situations.

Sammie also created a file folder game she called "Stocking Sodas" to help an individual learn how to properly stock sodas—a core function of his job. After working on the activity for a week, he improved his skills and later excelled at work. This activity has become a staple of her organization's vocational activities program.



SAMMIE HAIDER

- REM North Dakota
- Minot, ND
- 4 years as a DSP

Orma Houston

2020 Ohio DSP of the Year

Strong bonds are part of what makes Orma an effective DSP. She forges relationships with the people she supports by listening to them as individuals and taking care to note their individual needs, *then* molding her approach based on what she sees.

Orma understands that her job isn't to be a boss, mother or guardian. Her relationship with the people she works with is built on a kinship that centers around empowering them maximize themselves as individuals, achieving their goals and striving for independence.



ORMA HOUSTON

- Dungarvin
- Kettering, OH
- 7 years as a DSP

Donna Koscher

2020 Oklahoma DSP of the Year

When Donna realized that the existing classroom experience of a person she supports wasn't conducive to their learning style or abilities, she insisted on a meeting with the teacher to see how she could help. She discovered that the curriculum consisted of abstract assignments that required visual reading, writing and problem-solving.

Donna knew the student's vision impairment contributed to their struggles, but wasn't a reflection of their competence. Donna made suggestions to the educational team to encourage more tactile learning. With this new plan, the student has returning to some fundamental lessons and is grasping concepts more easily.



DONNA KOSCHER

- Dungarvin
- Oklahoma City, OK
- 3 years as a DSP

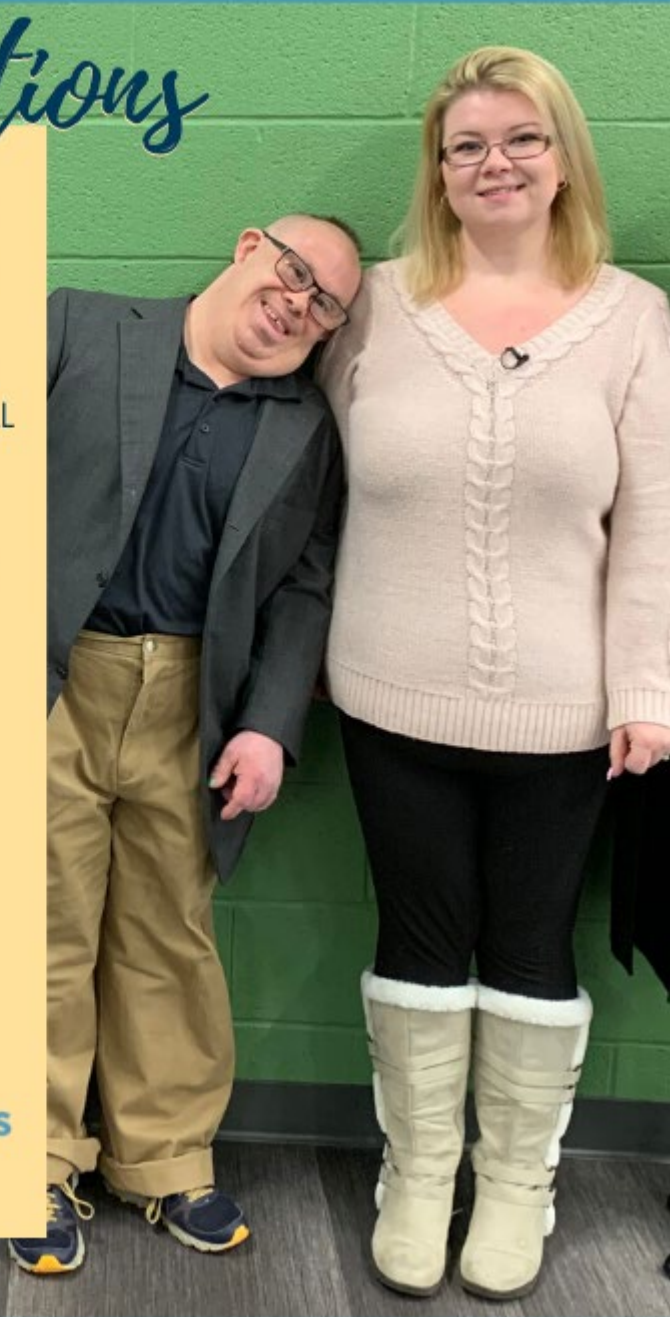
Congratulations NATALIE!

ANCOR'S 2020 PENNSYLVANIA
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL
OF THE YEAR

"I'm determined to
make sure the
people I support
have a life like
yours and mine."



Penn-Mar
Human Services
Transforming Life Into Living



CONGRATULATIONS, JULIAN! MASSACHUSETTS DSP OF THE YEAR!



The Individuals, staff, Board and family members of WCI – Work, Community, Independence could not be prouder of what you've accomplished! You're a fantastic example to everyone who works with you. The Individuals which we serve are all the better for having you as part of their lives. Congratulations!



Congratulations to the recognized DSPs and **THANK YOU** to all DSPs for the work that you do, especially for your work on the front lines during the COVID-19 health crisis.

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Sherrie Threadgill

2020 Oregon DSP of the Year

SHERRIE THREADGILL

- Dungarvin
- Portland, OR
- 10 years as a DSP

Sherrie supports someone who lost custody of her baby. Sherrie talked to the individual and together, they formulated a plan to help her regain custody. Sherrie developed schedules and reminders to help her clean, make and keep appointments, plan and cook meals, and several other tasks that empowered them to obtain the independence and responsibility required to take care of a child.

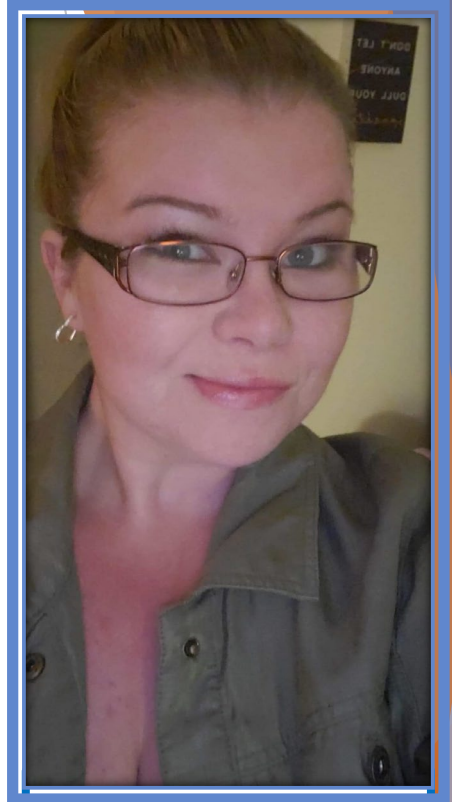
Thanks to the woman's hard work and dedication, along with Sherrie's support, she recently regained custody of her child. Sherrie provided the structure the woman needed to accomplish her goal of regaining what was, to her, the most important relationship in the world.

Natalie Place

2020 Pennsylvania DSP of the Year

Natalie sees each individual she supports as their own person and isn't afraid to push the envelope and encourage teams, individuals and families to dream bigger. She is a leader among her peers who encourages people to build and maintain friendships in support of high-quality, fulfilling lives. She holds herself and her entire team to a high standard of accountability when it comes to ensuring supports are person-centered.

Natalie is a dreamer, and many lives have been transformed as a result. She helps those around her maneuver around obstacles that can threaten their independence.



NATALIE PLACE

- Penn-Mar Human Services
- Red Lion, PA
- 9 years as a DSP

Harriett Brown

2020 South Carolina DSP of the Year



HARRIETT BROWN

- Willowglen Academy
South Carolina
- Kingstree, SC
- 20 years as a DSP

Ms. Harriett, as she's known, has long supported an individual with significant communication support needs. Ms. Harriett devised a list of short phrases and words, and then took the time to help the Individual learn how and when to use those phrases and words, to communicate their needs.

Now, instead of communicating through self-injurious behaviors, screaming and physical aggression, the person Ms. Harriet supports uses words and phrases to express their needs.

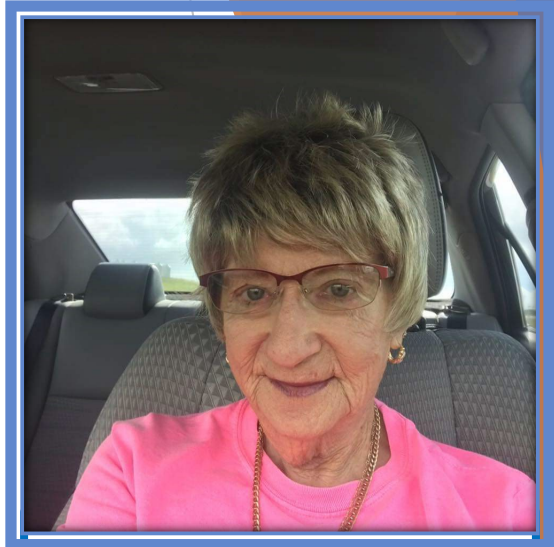
Ms. Harriet routinely meets the needs of the individuals in her care. Her dedication and commitment to justice, equality and fairness make her an outstanding DSP.

Donnette Anderson

2020 South Dakota DSP of the Year

Donnette worked one-on-one with an individual who wanted to learn how to manage their own money. She helped them learn the value of different bills and coins, how to carry money, and how to make purchases safely. Donnette also promotes involvement in the community and helps organize sporting event outings and other opportunities to connect in the community by coordinating transportation to and from events.

Donnette has actively promoted participation at the day center, where she supports people to improve daily living skills, build friendships and set personal boundaries. These combine to enable people to become as independent as possible.



DONETTE ANDERSON

- Vista Care
- Pierre, SD
- 35 years as a DSP

Pam Weaver

2020 Tennessee DSP of the Year



PAM WEAVER

- Core Services of Northeast Tennessee
- Johnson City, TN
- 9 years as a DSP

Pam works with an individual who is social, but hasn't always had the opportunity to form relationships beyond staff and the other people supported by Pam's organization. But when Pam helped this individual gain employment at a restaurant in 2018, it opened up a whole new world of opportunity. With Pam's support, the individual became a valued member of the team at work.

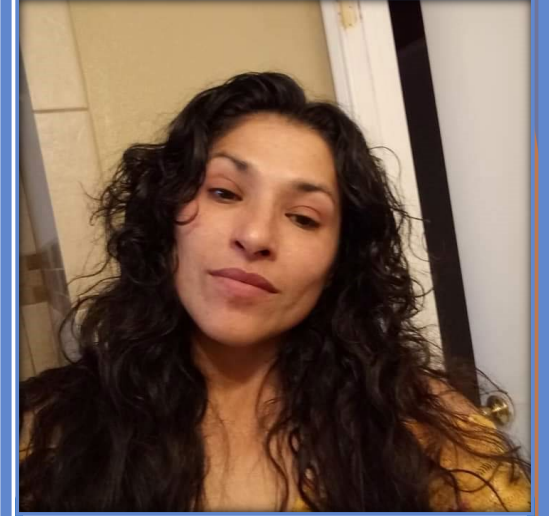
By standing in the background and coaching only when needed, Pam has helped this individual form friendships with coworkers, supervisors and customers. Pam has also helped the individual maintain contact with a number of relatives. Through Pam's behind-the-scenes encouragement, the person now has the social life they always dreamed of.

Luisa Gallegos

2020 Texas DSP of the Year

Luisa works with an individual who doctors were convinced would be permanently bedridden. Unconvinced, Luisa supported the individual to no longer be confined to the bed—and now to be able to sit up and even use a wheelchair on their own. Most importantly, this has enabled the individual to achieve one of their personal goals: attending a day rehabilitation program again.

Luisa's dedication to the people she supports has enabled them to go from being isolated to participating in the activities they care about. Luisa has played a pivotal role in ensuring the people she supports can truly be part of the community.

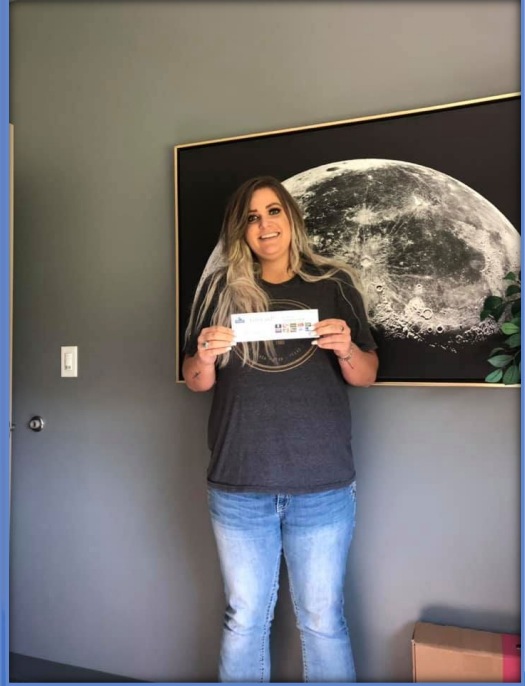


LUISA GALLEGOS

- BrightSpring Texas
- San Angelo, TX
- 10 years as a DSP

Kasey Gericke

2020 Utah DSP of the Year



KASEY GERICKE

- Chrysalis
- Cedar City, UT
- 3 years as a DSP

Kasey plays an active role in implementing person-centered plans and making sure those plans are realistic and successful. She takes it upon herself to think of realistic goals that will help people she supports develop new skills.

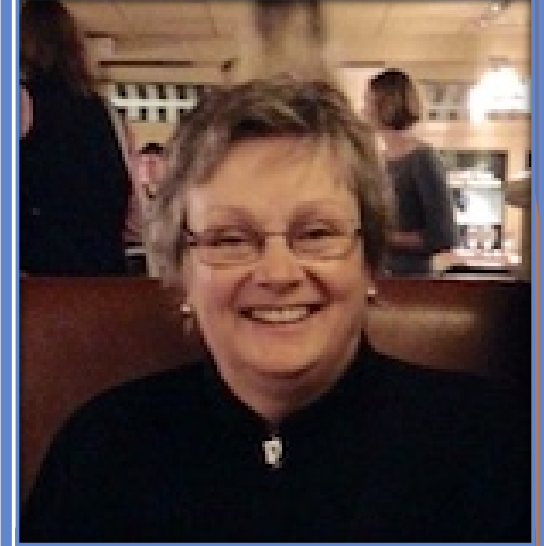
Kasey understands that not all individuals naturally advocate for what they want or need. Therefore, she takes it upon herself to amplify the voices of the people she supports on all fronts. She helps them articulate their wants and needs to family members, support coordinators, caseworkers and even judges. Kasey puts her heart, soul and time into ensuring that every person whose path crosses hers is better than it was before.

Judy Ververs

2020 Vermont DSP of the Year

Judy brought one of the men she supports to see civil rights leader John Lewis speak at a local theater. Together, they developed a passion for advocacy and public speaking. This introduction to the Civil Rights Movement, along with his ambition and Judy's support, helped the person grow as a respected leader and self-advocate throughout the state.

By her very nature, Judy believes in the power of curiosity and learning, and actively seeks to understand the best way to support peoples' educational and personal growth. As a lifelong learner and educator, Judy teaches and supports people to embrace their fullest, most human and person-centered lives.



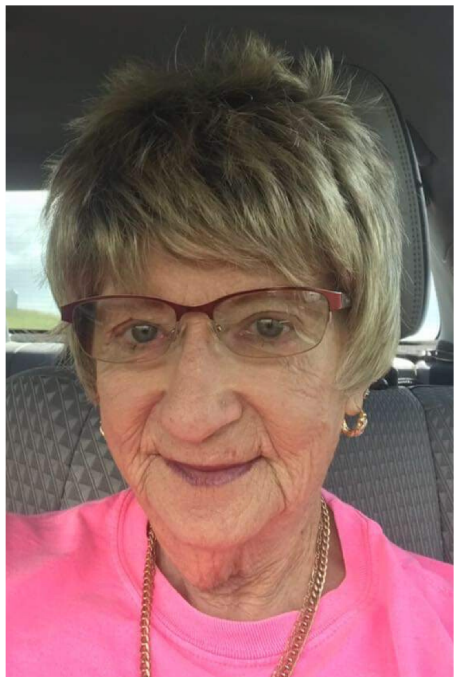
JUDY VERVERS

- Champlain Community Services
- Colchester, VT
- 2 years as a DSP

Congrats!

DONNETTE ANDERSON

Vista Care's DSP of the Year



Donnette's latest accomplishments include working towards being a host home provider with Vista Care!

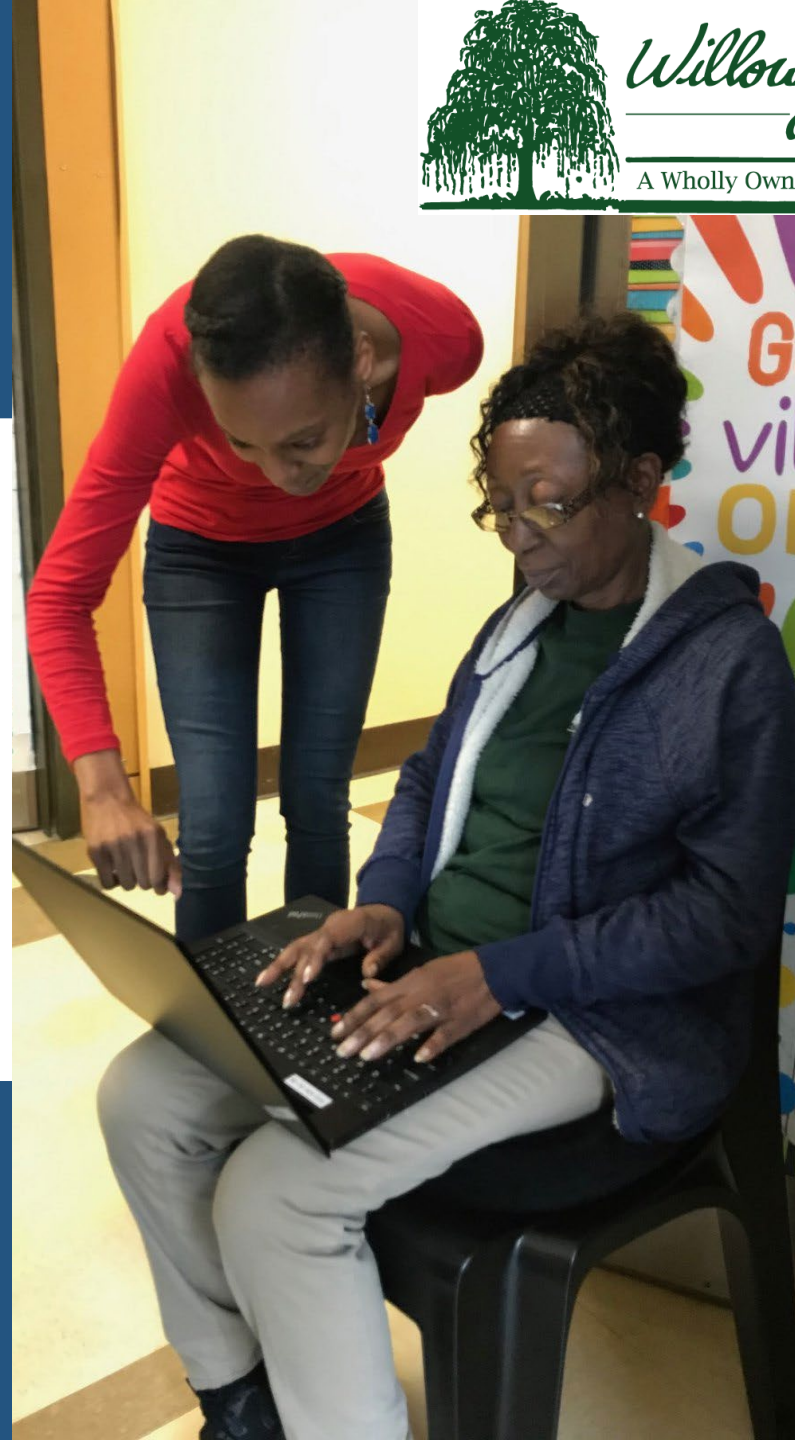
"She has actively promoted participation at the day center that works on improving daily living skills, building friendships, and setting boundaries in their personal life."

"She had another individual that was struggling with leaving his apartment. She started out slow with making weekly contact to build that relationship and worked out steps to slowly leave the apartment to go places of interest in the community."

"She promotes involvement in the community by attending sporting events, setting up rides, and assisting with taking them to the event."



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Congratulations to

**Ms. Harriett
Brown**

South Carolina's
2020 DSP
of the Year

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Marquita Moore

2020 Virginia DSP of the Year



MARQUITA MOORE

- BrightSpring Virginia
- Richmond, VA
- 8 years as a DSP

Marquita creates an environment that allows each individual she supports to feel valued, which in turn helps them build relationships with others.

Marquita advocates daily for people who leverage her program's supports and encourages each person to cultivate healthy, meaningful relationships with their family members.

Marquita has outstanding patience, and provides exceptional encouragement with each individual. Her patience and discipline in addressing every situation is balanced and positive, and her personal interactions inspire positive living and working environments.

Jodi Tofstad

2020 Washington DSP of the Year

Jodi is always supporting people to reach their goals. She ensures those she supports can participate in the activities they prefer. She takes the time needed to let people complete tasks for themselves, offering encouragement along the way. Jodi has always been a great advocate for people with diverse abilities, making sure their needs are communicated and addressed.

Jodi has a gentle and calm demeanor, which helps her break down barriers to connect with people and learn about their dreams and aspirations. Jodi is diligent in attending to the needs of everyone she supports.



JODI TOFSTAD

- BrightSpring Washington
- Puyallup, WA
- 10 years as a DSP

Carmen Dowler

2020 West Virginia DSP of the Year



CARMEN DOWLER

- BrightSpring West Virginia
- Parkersburg, WV
- 4 years as a DSP

Carmen works with an individual who only occasionally liked to get out of the house. However, once Carmen discovered that this woman loved going out to eat with her friends, Carmen began arranging for her to have lunch dates every couple weeks. Now, Carmen accompanies the woman she supports on weekly lunch dates.

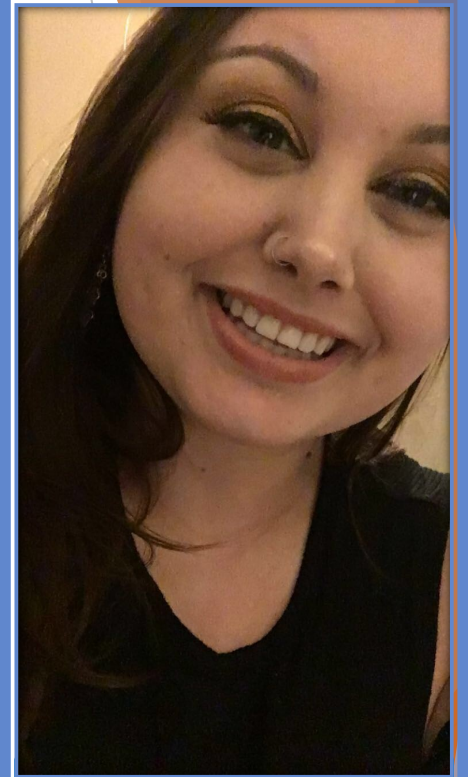
Carmen's commitment is unsurprising: she is a well-rounded person and person-centered DSP. She goes above and beyond for every person supported by her agency—not just the people she supports directly. Carmen always has a smile on her face and truly strives to make a difference.

Brianna Helms

2020 Wisconsin DSP of the Year

Brianna believes in the power of positive words to empower the people she supports. For example, she uses mirroring techniques (and has taught her colleagues to do the same) to relate to one of the people she supports who previously struggled to connect with others. Building rapport was thought to be impossible, but not for Brianna!

Brianna continuously strives to improve the lives of everyone around her. She is reliable, dedicated and knowledgeable when it comes to the needs of the people she supports, and their quality of life is better because of it.



BRIANNA HELMS

- Innovative Services
- Stevens Point, WI
- 5 years as a DSP



CONGRATULATIONS

to all of this year's award winners and
thank you for your impact on so many!



RELIAS



Relias is proud to recognize all of
the great work that DSPs do to
support individuals in living
meaningful lives.