

Recognizing Excellence 2022

Honoring the 2022 Class of Outstanding Direct Support Professionals

The 2022 DSP of the Year Awards
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difference makes all the
difference in the world.**

*Proud to Congratulate
2022 DSP of the Year
Award Recipients.*

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Congratulations to all Direct Support Professionals

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Thank You, Direct Support Professionals!

A letter from ANCOR's leadership

To all those who advocate on behalf of our direct support workforce:

The burden of living in and trying to survive a pandemic over the last couple of years has been a heavy weight on all of our shoulders. However, for people with disabilities and the people who support them, that weight has been magnified exponentially. Over the course of this global health crisis, we have heard stories of loss, fear and sadness.

But we have also heard countless stories of love, resilience and tremendous devotion.

Together with you, we have spent the past year advocating for unprecedented funding for community I/DD services because we know how badly our workforce needs better support and higher wages. It is that same recognition that leads us to honor the direct support workforce with ANCOR's annual DSP of the Year Awards. This year, our judging panel had the impossible task of selecting the 51 professionals profiled here from among more than 300 outstanding nominations.

From finding innovative ways to keep people with disabilities connected to family and friends during COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, to recreating annual trips that were canceled due to the pandemic, to the prioritization of person-centered supports to not only support increased independence but meaningful lives (from employment to intimacy), this year's class of honorees has done it all.

We hope you'll take the time to read through the stories chronicled here. As you do, keep in mind that these represent just a small sampling of the drive, dedication and devotion delivered by direct support professionals, day in and day out.

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

Sincerely,



Barbara Merrill
Chief Executive Officer
ANCOR



Heidi Mansir
President
ANCOR Board of Directors

2022 National DSP of the Year

Maria Swift

Penn-Mar Human Services
Westminster, MD



Whether it's tying up a muffler on a company van or creating visual aids to improve supports, Maria's innovation knows no bounds! She constantly strives to better understand the people she supports by creating aids, doing task analysis and picking up on gestures. By utilizing these to tailor supports, individuals feel a sense of ownership over their actions and can ultimately be proud of their progress.

Consider how Maria supports individuals with dementia in creating daily schedules. She has taken the initiative to capture and print photos of the individuals completing common tasks so they can easily understand their options and choose between activities. Maria is always asking herself, "What do they need to complete this task without me?" and then putting the answer into action.

Maria excels at supporting and advocating alongside individuals while supporting families in a manner that is respectful, informative and doesn't cross boundaries. This was tested when she began working with a family who has guardianship of a 22-year-old man who wanted to find a girlfriend.

The man's family was initially against him finding a girlfriend, and they were concerned that encouraging this desire could lead to a range of problems. Maria shared that it was important to work with the desire rather than wave it away, as the results could be more dangerous. Instead, she took the time to explain to the family why supporting him to pursue his goals was so critical to living a more fulfilling life. At the same time, she recognized their concerns and worked to put their minds at ease.

Maria's approach centers the understanding of an individual's needs and a focus on when and why anxiety or discomfort is being triggered. She then implements techniques to de-escalate these experiences through redirection rather than avoidance, so that the people she supports can continue participating in their communities in a way that feels safe.

MARIA SWIFT

ANCOR'S 2022
DSP OF THE YEAR AWARD
OVERALL NATIONAL WINNER

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all of us, and the perfect
example of what it means
to live courageously!



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2022 Special Category Award for Innovation

Cheyenne Rice

Chrysalis

Cedar City, UT

Cheyenne loves coming up with creative solutions to help the people she supports overcome challenges. This is demonstrated by the ways she helps people manage a range of food allergies. Cheyenne did extensive research to develop a cookbook for an individual with allergies to dairy, corn, rice, yeast, baking powder and baking soda.

Now that the cookbook is complete, the person Cheyenne supports can use it to choose meals from the book of options. Then, they work together to prepare healthy, delicious meals. From identifying what groceries are needed to pre-packaging meals for the week, Cheyenne supports the management of otherwise dangerous allergies in creative and fun ways—all while staying within the calorie limit prescribed by the doctor!



2022 Special Category Award for Leadership

Brett Breeze

Boundless
Englewood, OH



In the past year, Brett has assumed a number of leadership roles to support frontline positions. When integrated care was introduced at Brett's agency, it was evident that many of the people he supported could benefit from an increased focus on behavioral health goals. Brett took the initiative to learn these techniques to improve not only the supports he delivers, but also those delivered by his colleagues.

From there, Brett designed an entire training curriculum to support the initiative. He shared strategies and applications and demonstrated the successes of those supported under this new guidance. He provided encouragement for his peers to dig deeper into their service delivery approach. It's no wonder Brett's team recently celebrated one of the people they support for achieving their goal of community employment and a renewed sense of belonging.



Congratulations

**BRETT
BREEZE**

ANCOR's 2022 Direct Support Professional
of the Year for Leadership

On behalf of the entire Boundless family, thank you
for your inspiring commitment to building a world
that realizes the boundless potential of *all* people.



2022 Special Category Award for Relationships

Lakiesha Johnson

Hope House Foundation
Portsmouth, VA



An individual Lakiesha supports seemed disinterested in doing anything outside of their home. Lakiesha knew that wasn't healthy, so she began to search for ways to encourage community participation that would resonate with him. That led her to a local barber shop, to which she reached out in hopes of bringing the people she supports to visit.

The men Lakiesha supports now look forward to going to the barber shop and refuse to miss the chance to get their trims and shaves! They also enjoy the social scene in the shop and have become a part of its culture. Lakiesha took the time to understand the interpersonal needs that were being overlooked, recognizing that meeting these needs would motivate the people she supports to build deeper relationships and develop a sense of community.

2022 Special Category Award for Person-Centeredness

Bruce Thomas

Families First of Southern Vermont
Whittingham, VT

Bruce sees himself as an instrument that the people he supports can use to be as independent and autonomous as possible in whatever they choose to pursue. Bruce models how offering a human being relational wealth can combat historical trauma and gift adults with the ability to trust, laugh and love.

Bruce has supported people in everything from maintaining a kindling business, modifying tractors and lawnmowers to be safer for people who enjoy landscaping, improving the management of a diabetes diagnosis, and maintaining connections with family members. By supporting people to attend birthday parties and reunions, and to take trips so people could experience the ocean for the first time, Bruce empowers people to live the life that's most meaningful to them—all while creating unforgettable experiences!





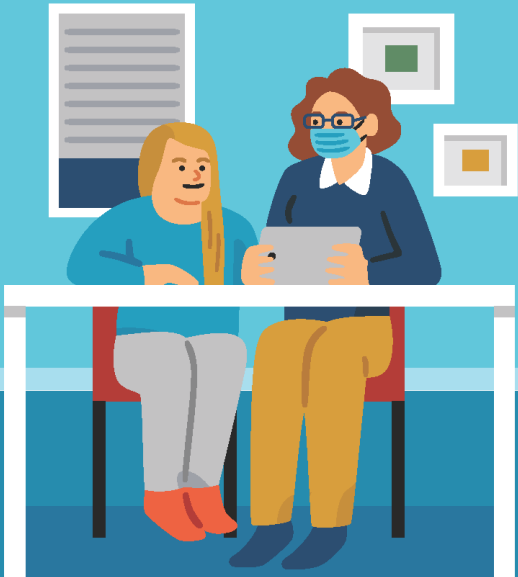
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2022 Alabama DSP of the Year

Tina Cox

Sevita
Cullman, AL

The people Tina supports know they can count on her to take them on outings and activities. She is creative in encouraging them to get out and about, visiting new places and old favorites. If you find yourself in their community, you may run into them—at the park, in a craft store, at the toy store, at a Mexican restaurant, or just about anywhere there's fun to be had!

Tina recognizes each person's individuality and works to ensure they are treated as their own person. She continues to put a smile on the faces of the people she supports day in and out. It takes a special person to be loved by all, and that's exactly what Tina has accomplished with her colleagues and the people she supports!



2022 Alaska DSP of the Year Christina Carlberg

Independent Direct Support Professional
Ketchikan, AK



Christina believes in the power of person-centeredness and places it at the core of her supports. She has successfully helped someone she supports to move into an accessible home, and did so within a week of them expressing their intent to live independently. Christina helped secure rent relief and applied for several grant opportunities to ensure the newly minted renter could be financially secure.

Of course, Christina didn't stop there—she went on to develop a professional relationship with the individual's doctor so she could monitor changes in their health, further enhancing their ability to live independently. With health, housing and finances secure, Christina can now focus on supporting the maintenance of loving relationships with friends and family by devising fun activities for them to do together. Christina is a shining example person-centered supports!

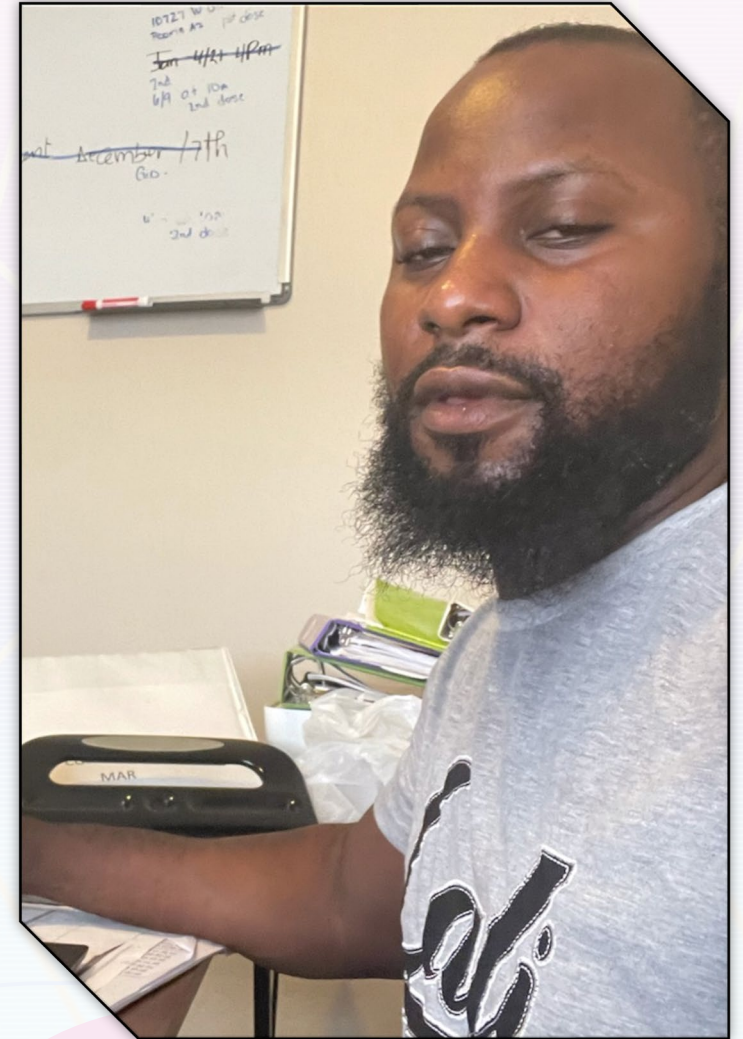
2022 Arizona DSP of the Year

Junior Tarwo

BrightSpring Health Services
Phoenix, AZ

Junior works at a group home and promotes a positive environment for the young people he supports there. He encourages them to talk about their wants, needs and desires, and attentively listens and provides positive feedback. This has helped him tremendously in building relationships with the young men at the home, many of whom have experienced trauma and have difficulty trusting people.

Recently, someone Junior supports was having a difficult time, to which he responded to going for a 3 am walk. Rather than getting angry, Junior stayed calm and joined the young man on his walk so he could listen and learn more about what was upsetting him. They walked together until daybreak, and in the four hours they spent together, Junior suggested ideas for how to deal with difficult feelings and helped the young man practice important coping skills.



2022 Arkansas DSP of the Year

Nick Bryant

Van Buren County Special School
Clinton, AR



Nick treats everyone he supports as an individual and focuses on their specific needs. He is an outstanding communicator with families, in part because he takes the time to help the people he supports write meaningful and appropriate goals and objectives, and challenges them to overcome their doubts and aim high.

In addition to being a rockstar DSP, Nick is also a Special Olympics coach. Due to his communication and leadership skills, he has risen in the ranks of Arkansas Special Olympics and has been promoted to Area 17 Regional Bocce Coach, and was selected to coach the Arkansas Bocce Team in the June 2022 Special Olympics Games in the in Orlando, FL. We'll be rooting for Nick and his entire team this June!



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-Clint Chapman, Owner*



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We struck GOLD with our DSPs



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Nevada



Laura Nelson
Wisconsin



Stephanie Newton
Kentucky



Jonny Nelson
Colorado



Stanley Adu-Gyamfi
Ohio



Staranne Dauer
Minnesota



Lillian Jim
New Mexico



Sheri Harris
Oklahoma



Francisco Lemus
California



Florence Melvin
North Carolina

Dungarvin

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2022 California DSP of the Year

Francisco Lemus

Dungarvin
South Gate, CA

As his organization began re-opening after early-pandemic shutdowns, Francisco shared with his colleagues the likes, dislikes, individualized goals, and barriers and challenges of the people his team supports. Francisco offers valuable insight and coaching when new DSPs join the staff, and he makes himself available to all his colleagues to discuss ideas for activities that can benefit the people he supports.

But Francisco's communication prowess doesn't end there—he translates for the people he supports during classes and activities, as well as for families during support meetings. Francisco has helped the people he supports connect with their families and with one another by recognizing each person's unique communication style—whether they speak English, Spanish or American Sign Language. Across the board, Francisco's support is key to connection and community!



2022 Colorado DSP of the Year

John “Jonny” Nelson

Dungarvin
Colorado Springs, CO



When COVID-19 turned the world upside down, Jonny knew he had to get creative to keep things as normal as possible. He read books over FaceTime to help someone he supports continue honing their reading abilities and build their spelling and vocabulary skills.

When the pandemic made it unsafe to go out in public, Jonny brought his guitar to the home of another person he supports for a jam session. The aspiring musician was thrilled to learn how to play their favorite song, “Smoke on the Water” by Deep Purple, on the guitar! Jonny also instituted “porch time” and played socially distanced Tic-Tac-Toe on a dry erase board. Jonny also took the people he supports on short walks around the neighborhood so they could not only get some exercise, but also the chance to talk and be listened to—both of which helped put minds at ease during a very difficult time.

2022 Connecticut DSP of the Year

Sandra Strilkauskas

Aspire Living & Learning
Waterbury, CT

When someone Sandy supports refused physical therapy to learn to walk again after breaking their hip, Sandy contacted the PT team and arranged for therapy to occur during her work hours so she could encourage them and celebrate their progress. After four months, the person learned to walk again and was able to return home.

When COVID-19 first hit, a group of people Sandy supports couldn't go on their routine coffee trips. Sandy saw this as an opportunity to teach people how to make their own iced coffee—they even went to Dunkin' Donuts to get the plastic cups they really liked! When one of the social butterflies Sandy supports was really missing chatting with the servers they used to see, Sandy worked with clinicians to devise a plan to enable them to safely resume daily drive-thru trips so they could continue having those important interactions in the community.



2022 Delaware DSP of the Year

Ruby Mills

Mosaic
Wilmington, DE



After being placed in the care of the state a long time ago, a man Ruby now supports didn't have contact with any of his family. He doesn't communicate verbally, but often uses gestures to express his desires. On holidays, Ruby could see that it was difficult for the man to lack any family connections. In turn, she researched years of historical documents in an effort to locate any family members. This led Ruby to eventually come across the man's younger sister!

Ruby reached out and was able to reconnect the man she supports with his sister, who agreed to come for a visit. When she arrived, the man Ruby supports was ecstatic. Not only did this offer the opportunity to build a relationship with his sister, but also her daughter—the man's niece. Thanks to Ruby, the man now feels a sense of family and belonging.



Ruby Mills | Delaware



Cindy Hartig | Nebraska

Congratulations!

Mosaic is proud to have these **2022 Direct Support Professional of the Year Award** recipients represent the thousands of outstanding and committed DSPs across our 13-state network.



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Congratulations to all 2022 DSP Honorees!

Thank you for the incredible work you do every day to make a difference in the lives of those we serve.



Your hard work, creativity, and tireless dedication, allow GoodLife and care providers across the nation to continue to provide care, support, and services for individuals with disabilities and barriers to independence.

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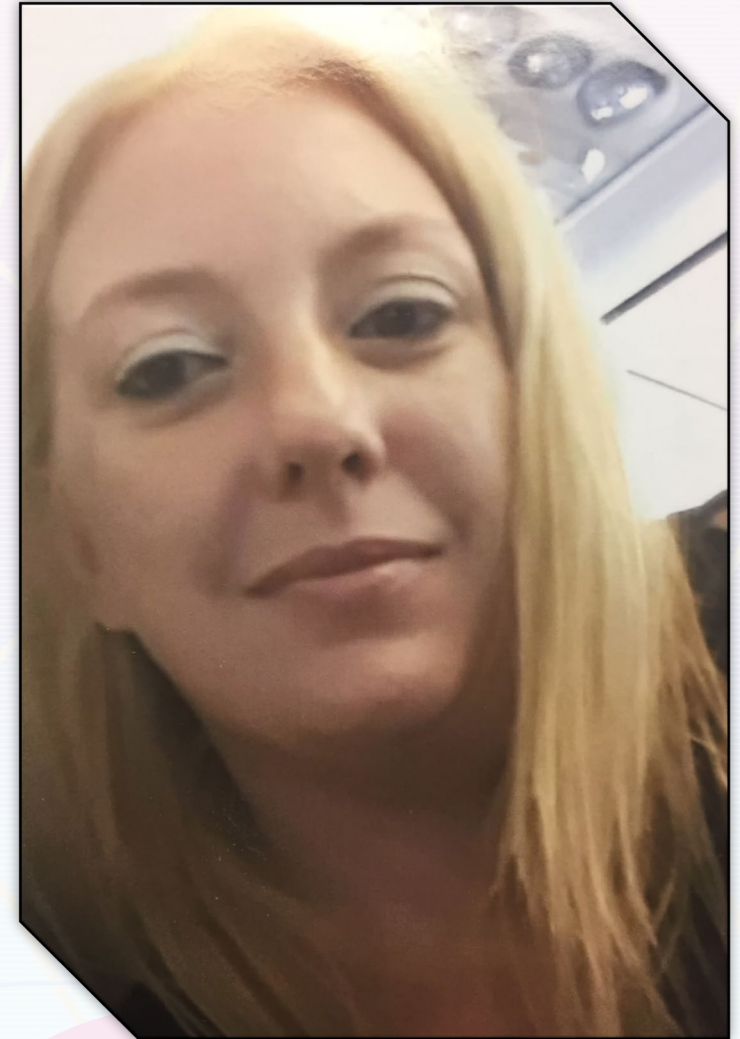
2022 Florida DSP of the Year

Sherry Ellis

BrightSpring Health Services
Port Richey, FL

In 2018, Sherry began working with someone with a visual impairment, which often caused them to experience intense levels of fear—and, in turn, intense behavioral challenges—whenever they were alone. Sherry championed person-centered supports by making it her mission to develop a relationship and implement a communication-heavy approach with choice-based techniques to redirect fears.

Sherry learned the various activities that prompted positive reactions and, eventually, even bursts of laughter. Sherry and other staff began integrating her approach with their active treatment, which led to a number of breakthroughs, including gradually navigating to the restroom without any assistance and shedding the fear of being alone. What used to be intense outbreaks soon became calm verbal requests. Thanks to Sherry, they finally gained the confidence to truly shine!



2022 Georgia DSP of the Year Temeake Lowe

RHA Health Services
Hephzibah, GA



At the beginning of the pandemic, special protocols were put in place that limited visitation in the homes RHA operates. Though necessary, these limitations strained family relationships. In response, Temeake worked within her agency's guidelines to set up outdoor visitation areas to ensure the people she supports could visit with their families.

One of the people Temeake supports is very close with their family and can grow anxious if they go stretches without seeing them. Temeake's efforts enabled them to have the support needed to gather with family safely, which in turn mitigated intense behaviors that increased in frequency when day programs were closed. Thanks to Temeake's innovative approach and understanding of the needs of the person she supports, they minimized their own feelings of anxiety, isolation and sadness during an incredibly trying time.

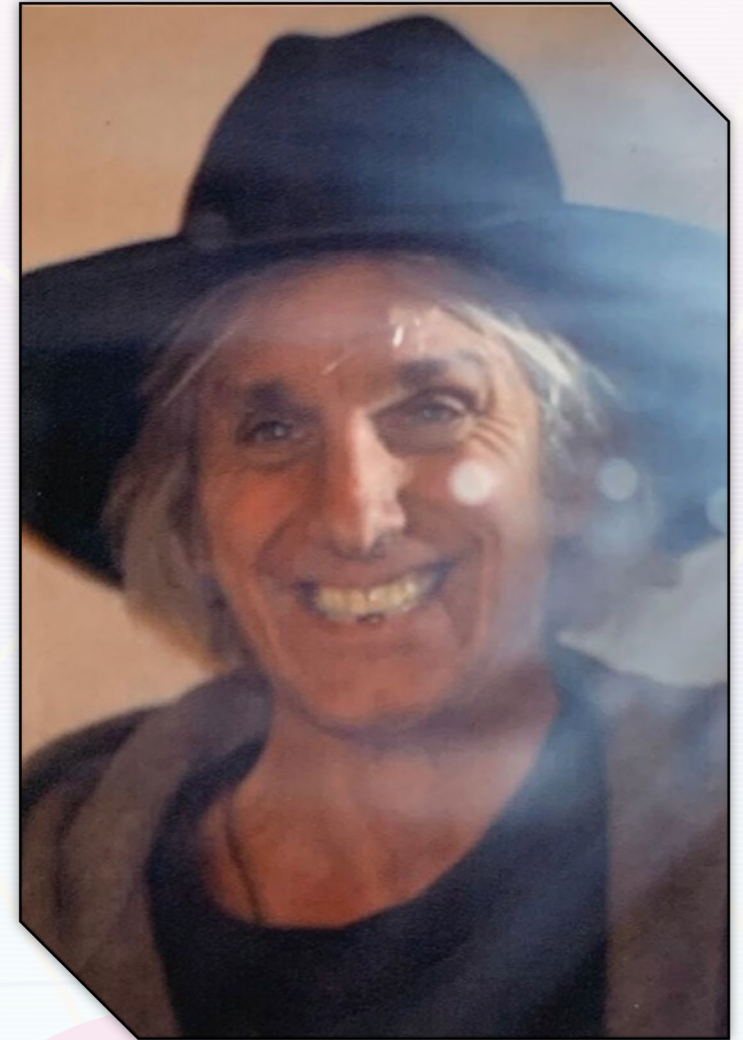
2022 Idaho DSP of the Year

Jon Ball

BrightSpring Health Services
Dalton Gardens, ID

Jon takes the time to get to know the people he supports, and then uses his understanding of their strengths to support them to accomplish their goals. He discovered that two individuals he supports learn and focus better through visual stimulation. He used this discovery to support one person to learn to use pictures to communicate their shopping list and the person to use index cards to recite their address.

Jon also works with individuals on positive affirmations to redirect challenging behaviors, and has discovered music therapy as an effective technique. Music helps the people he supports feel calm and at peace, which fosters better communication and has empowered people to be more independent and more well-rounded by helping them pursue and achieve their goals.



2022 Illinois DSP of the Year

Veronica Lea

Trinity Services
Crest Hill, IL



Veronica pays close attention to the people she supports and does not hesitate to report changes in behavior or medical condition. Her attention to detail and diligence in reporting has helped prevent serious medical issues. One individual she supports developed a slight but frequent cough, causing Veronica to notify a nurse and seek medical care. It was determined that there was a mass on the person's lung that required immediate medical treatment.

Veronica noticed another person she supports was acting differently in the morning and again arranged medical care—this time, it was determined that the person had a minor stroke. Thanks to Veronica's attentive, tailored supports, people are living fuller, healthier and more independent lives.

2022 Indiana DSP of the Year

Susia Bennett

BrightSpring Health Services
Cambridge City, IN

Susia supported someone who developed a decubitus ulcer that would not heal. She requested specific instructions from the doctor and every day, for several months, followed those instructions. In the beginning, the person rarely spoke to anyone, but Susia would always talk to them during her shift, eventually establishing a trusting relationship. Susia continued to take the time to build the relationship by reminding the person to provide feedback during treatment. Eventually they were speaking to Susia consistently, which helped them feel at ease and ready to pursue treatment for the ulcer. Though it wasn't easy, and treatments were often uncomfortable, Susia guided them to fully heal.

It's no wonder why, when the person's mother learned that Susia was nominated to be the 2022 Indiana DSP of the Year, she responded, "I don't know of a soul that deserves this award more than Susia!"



2022 Iowa DSP of the Year **Teresa Mueller**

Goodwill of the Heartland
Iowa City, IA



Teresa works to fully understand the individual needs of the people she supports. She generates ideas and plans to benefit the people she supports and follows through on those plans to encourage people to be self-reliant and strive for their goals. For example, she has supported people to achieve health goals by creating weekly meal plans and exercise routines and encouraging them to follow medical recommendations.

Teresa is consistent and assists people to know that hard work is necessary to accomplish their goals and become more independent. She provides reminders for why people are involved in creating their own goals and finds creative ways to motivate them to aim higher and dream bigger.

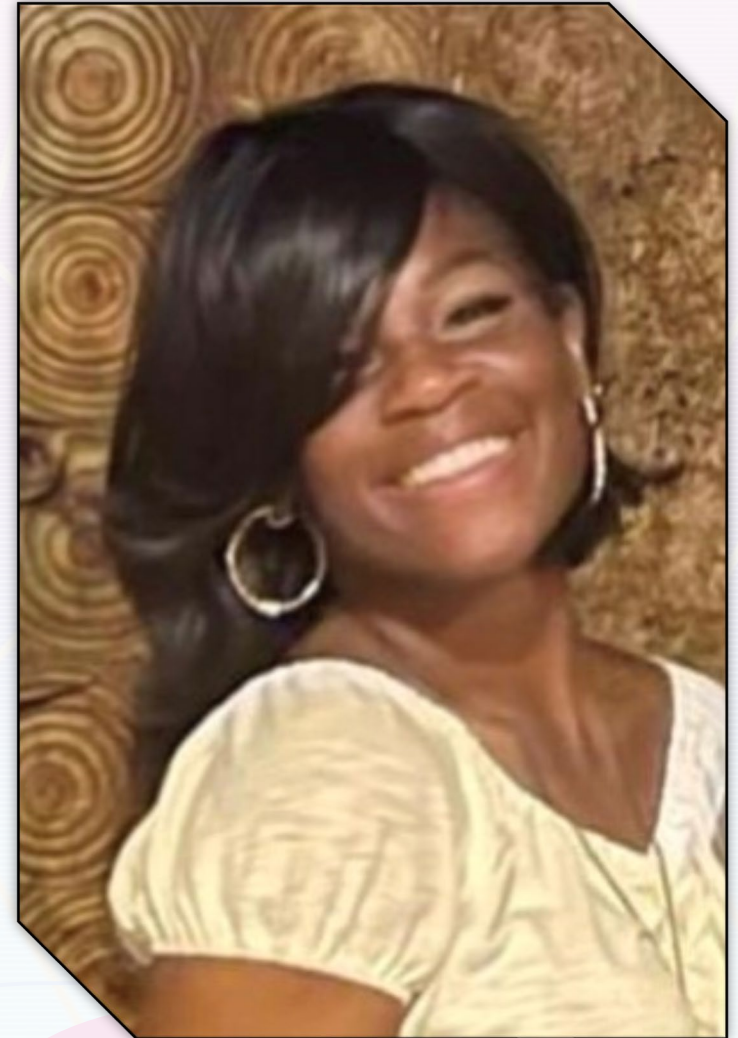
2022 Kansas DSP of the Year

Latoya Whitted-Witcher

BrightSpring Health Services
Fort Riley, KS

Latoya cares for each person she supports and their needs in a dignified way, and has built strong personal and professional relationships with the people she supports and their families. Many of the people Latoya's team supports need assistance with activities of daily living, such as bathing, toileting and feeding, and Latoya makes sure everyone on her team is providing these supports in an exceptional and dignified manner.

Latoya also makes sure the members of her team follow care plans and keep the home where they work clean and in good order. Latoya has become the trainer for the leads at other homes and has created a system to make documentation within the homes seamless. Latoya's "work smarter, not harder" mentality means there's no challenge too large to overcome!



2022 Kentucky DSP of the Year

Stephanie Newton

Dungarvin
Mt. Sterling, KY



Stephanie is the first person to say “I will” when the people Dungarvin supports ask who will attend Special Olympics, go to concerts, plan themed vacations, visit amusement parks and even attend pro wrestling events with them. Stephanie gives of herself to ensure that others around her smile, experience special moments, and live their best lives.

One of the people Stephanie supports uses a wheelchair and yearned to be able to go swimming. There were no accessible public pools in the area, but Stephanie wasn’t going to let stop her! She found a local hotel with a pool and made arrangements to go, only to discover that the pool wasn’t accessible. Undeterred, Stephanie made arrangements on-the-spot to safely move the person up the stairs and into the pool to help fulfill their dream!

2022 Louisiana DSP of the Year

Alechia Randall

BrightSpring Health Services
Lafayette, LA

Alechia is a reliable and dedicated leader who is always willing to help those around her reach their goals. She ensures every person she supports is taken care of. Alechia transports people to their medical appointments out of town and volunteers to pick up medications after hours.

After a hurricane struck a neighboring town, Alechia volunteered to pick up people whose homes were impacted and bring them to other group homes to ensure everyone had a warm bed in which to sleep. She also went shopping for them, purchasing clothes, toiletries and comfort items to help ease the stress and discomfort of being displaced by a natural disaster.



2022 Maine DSP of the Year

Leah McAlpine

OHI

Glenburn, ME



Leah consistently looks for ways to support people to use technology in ways they hadn't considered before. During the pandemic, she assisted people in setting up a Halloween Zoom party and virtual picnics. She was able to teach the people she supports to mute themselves when necessary and take turns with shared devices. With her help and encouragement, people learned to use voice-to-text and leave voice messages for friends and family.

Leah also regularly coaches coworkers who struggle using technology to gain more confidence in using essential online tools used for documentation. She volunteered to conduct training sessions on how to use the electronic medical record and document properly at numerous staff meetings in multiple locations. Leah constantly strives to find ways to provide better supports and improve communication!

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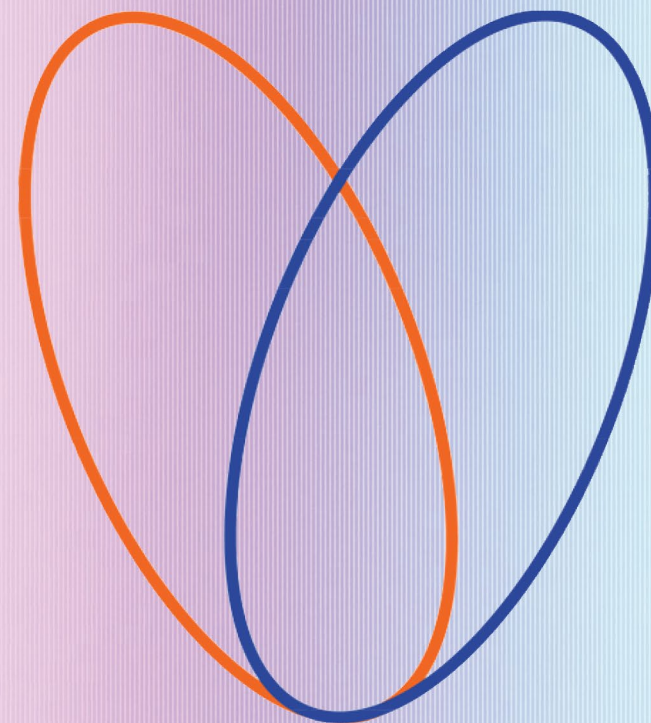


LEAH McALPINE

**ANCOR 2022 DSP
of the Year for Maine**

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2022 Maryland DSP of the Year

Tammy Wright

Consumer Direct Care Network
Waldorf, MD

Whereas most DSPs are nominated by their agencies, Tammy was nominated by one of the men she supports. That man just happens to be her father! We know every dad thinks his daughter is the best, but Tammy's dad may just have us convinced. "With her supports," Tammy's father writes, "I've been able to get medical care that I've needed for a long time. Thank you for this opportunity to share my love, admiration and humbleness for my daughter, Tammy."

It's not surprising, then, that Tammy's support extends well beyond the people she supports. Even when she's out shopping, she's looking for ways to help others, as evidenced by the time she helped drive an elderly stranger home after finding out she had been waiting for her ride for over two hours. Tammy clearly has a servant's heart—and we have no choice but to agree that her dad has the best daughter ever!





Congratulations to All Recipients of the 2022 DSP of the Year Awards!

Thank you for all that you do to
make a meaningful difference in the
lives of those you support.



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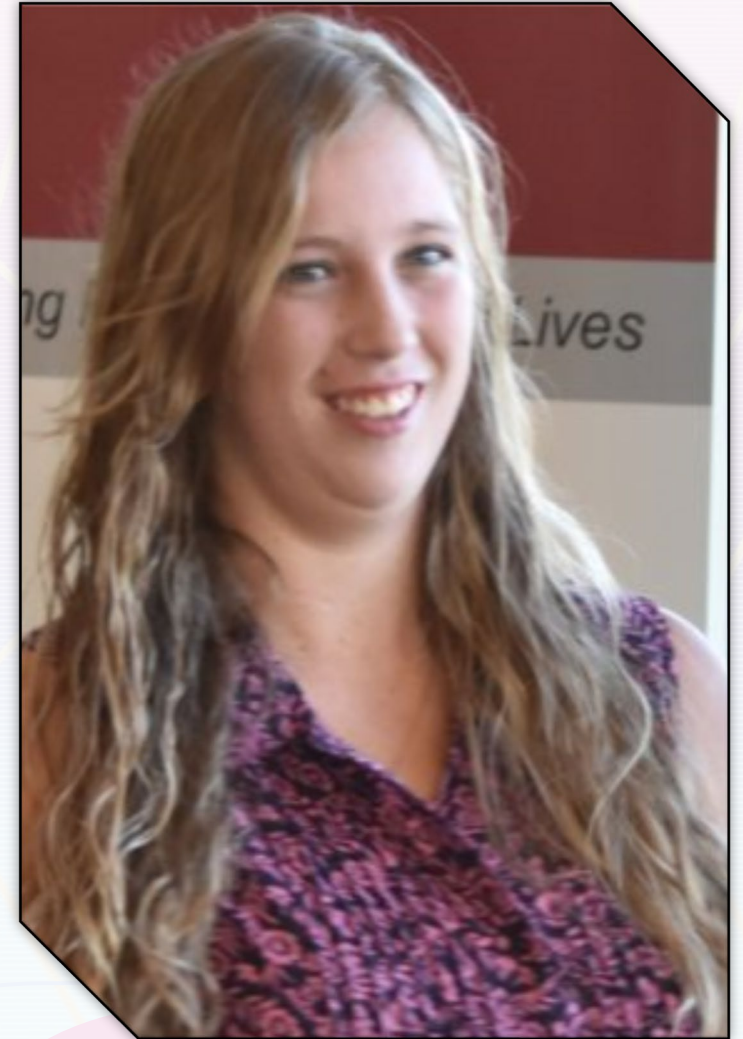
2022 Massachusetts DSP of the Year

Rachel Nicola-Jefferson

Berkshire County Arc
Pittsfield, MA

When an 80-year-old man Rachel supports wanted to go deep sea fishing, she sprung into action! After helping him secure a fishing license, she booked a day trip out of Hampton Beach—four hours away by car. Tammy and her team ensured they had plenty of space to maneuver as they realized their dream and fished for mackerel. They learned the proper technique of waving poles up and down to attract the fish and executed it perfectly to reel in several fish!

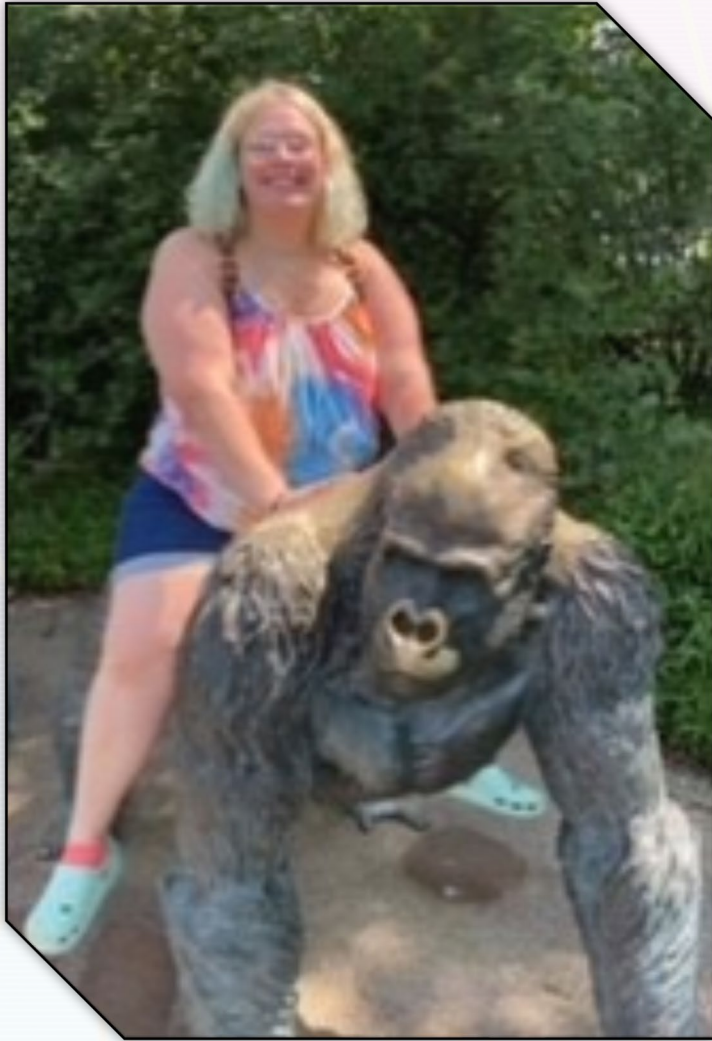
After the fishing trip, the man, Tammy and the other people she supports walked the strip, played games, shopped, listened to live music on the beach and treated themselves to a nice seafood dinner with a view of the beach. Back at home, they cooked and ate the fish they caught together. They were excited and happy the entire trip, and they are already talking about the next trip.



2022 Michigan DSP of the Year

Emily Conant

BrightSpring Health Services
Chesaning, MI



Emily is always willing to use creativity to keep the morale positive in the home where she works and to figure out ways to encourage people who aren't as motivated to get up on their feet or out of their rooms to interact with one another. For example, she'll often play music and create activities that pique the interests of the people she supports. She is always spicing up the menu in the home to add some extra flair and variety, and the people she supports very much enjoy her contributions.

Emily is great at encouraging those she supports and is their biggest cheerleader as they work to achieve their goals. She recently worked closely with two individuals in her program to complete several of their goals in just under a year—a clear marker of her passion and dedication!

Congratulations to our 2022 award-winning staff!

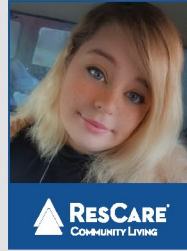
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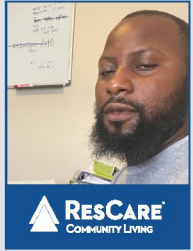
Jon Ball
Idaho



Susia Bennett
Indiana



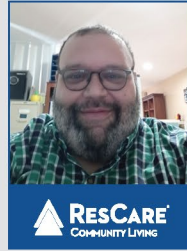
Emily Conant
Michigan



Junior Tarwo
Arizona



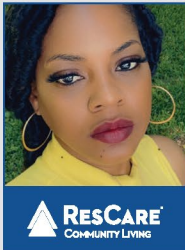
Latoya
Whitted-Witcher
Kansas



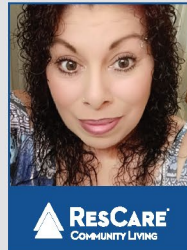
Angel DeJesus
New Jersey



Sherry Ellis
Florida



Alechia Randle
Louisiana



Isabel Diaz
Texas

C O N G R A T S

MICHAEL GUESS

MISSOURI DSP OF THE YEAR!





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2022 Minnesota DSP of the Year

Staranne Dauer

Dungarvin
Waldorf, MN

While supporting someone with a visual impairment to find a job, Star discovered that traditional avenues weren't yielding results. Through conversation, Star learned the person was an avid gardener and encouraged them to explore this as a work option. When leads at local greenhouse and garden stores didn't pan out, Star researched costs of securing a garden plot, along with the steps required to sell produce at the local farmer's market.

With Star's support, the individual develop a business plan, created an itemized list of supplies, and applied for a small business microgrant. The newly minted business owner is now starting seedlings in the basement of their home to prepare for spring and has a plan to rent space at the local farmer's market to sell produce from their community garden throughout the summer!



2022 Mississippi DSP of the Year

Tiffany Turner

Sevita
Water Valley, MS



Tiffany's approach is all about listening. By building trust, she's capable of opening lines of communication for the people she supports to share their goals. She also encourages them to reach higher, and then coordinates with staff to identify resources and opportunities to support these bigger, bolder hopes and dreams.

Through this approach, Tiffany exhibits care, love and respect, as well as her belief that everyone deserves to live a life full of dignity. It's one thing to say it, but Tiffany works hard to ensure the people she supports can accomplish milestones that are meaningful to them. Her approach is appreciated by the people she supports and their families, who have seen people they love live fuller, more complete lives.



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2022 Nebraska DSP of the Year

Cindy Hartig

Mosaic
Beatrice, NE



Cindy has spent 11 of her 27 years with Mosaic as a key part of the speech therapy team. With this time and experience, she has accrued a variety of techniques to communicate with the people she supports to help them live fuller, more independent lives. Cindy utilizes a countless array of picture books, charts, software and augmentative devices to develop pathways for substantive communication.

As a DSP, Cindy has carried over these skills to enhance the supports she provides. Cindy uses what she has learned to help people have meaningful days. Whether it's supporting people to secure employment, interpreting for families or simply developing trust, Cindy routinely displays the skills required to listen, understand and respond.

2022 Nevada DSP of the Year

Scarlet Cabral

Dungarvin
Las Vegas, NV

A woman Scarlet supports was known for challenging behaviors such as self-injury and physical aggression. Scarlet stepped up to the challenge by working diligently to build trust by identifying triggers and using them as an opportunity to teach and build rapport. Scarlet was able to redirect challenging behaviors into safer reactions, such as ripping paper or reading to help soothe feelings of aggression.

Scarlet's patient demeanor not only helped eliminate many of the restrictions necessitated by the woman's behavior, but also empowered her to live a more fulfilled life. Thanks to Scarlet's supports, she now hosts dinners and get-togethers with family, and is working to find ways to develop new relationships. For example, she met a new friend at her day program, and Scarlett supported her to invite her new friend over to hang out.



2022 New Hampshire DSP of the Year

Josh Matero

Aspire Living & Learning
Hampton, NH



When a person Josh supports began spending more time around other people, he noticed their desire to be involved. Josh helped them gain the confidence to socialize and build friendships. One activity they loved was throwing a football; Josh helped them learn how to do it, and they now regularly toss the football around without Josh's help.

Realizing that their abilities knew no bounds, Josh continued to encourage them to find hobbies and use those hobbies to connect with friends. They've since developed a love of listening to music with friends, and even enrolled in a music class where they're learning to play the tambourine. They also began volunteering at a food pantry where they've made more friends in the community, and have recently reconnected with family members. Thanks to Josh's supports, the person now has stronger relationships with family and friends!



Congratulations 2022 DSPs of the Year!



Sandra Strilkauskas

Your commitment and compassion help make living more fully and more independently a reality for the people we serve. Thanks to you, amazing things happen every day.

Communities are stronger when people realize their passions, potential, and power.

We rise by lifting others

Here's to those whose commitment to providing quality services lifts up and improves the lives of individuals every day



Congratulations to the 2022 DSPs of the year!



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2022 New Jersey DSP of the Year

Angel DeJesus

BrightSpring Health Services
Maple Shade, NJ

When one of the people Angel supports was involved in a minor car accident, they experienced severe back pain and required a course of physical therapy. The physical therapy was difficult, and after several weeks it began to take a toll on the individual's energy and quality of life—to the point that they started avoiding walking for fear of falling.

Angel noticed this fear and helped initiate an individualized support plan to strengthen them emotionally and mentally, alongside their physical recovery. With Angel's diligence, humor and patience, they shed their fear to achieve physical results. Angel patiently supported them to use a walker and gradually regain the confidence needed to maximize the impact of therapy. By considering the whole person and listening to their worries, Angel was able to construct solutions to not only aid physical healing, but mental well-being, too!



2022 New Mexico DSP of the Year

Lillian Jim

Dungarvin
Waterflow, NM



After one of the people supported by Lillian's agency passed away due to COVID-19, most staff chose to quarantine so they could keep themselves safe. Lillian, on the other hand, recognized that people couldn't go without critical supports, so she volunteered to continue working. She alternated shifts with another team member to ensure everyone was well-supported, including with the emotional support needed to grieve the loss of their housemate.

Lillian continued to find ways to provide safety and connectedness during the pandemic. Utilizing tablets, she organized Zoom visits with family and friends, and eventually instituted "window visits." One person's friend came over to watch a game show together through the window. Lillian's dedication and supports ensured safety, healing and the ability to maintain important relationships at a difficult time.

2022 Missouri DSP of the Year

Michael Guess

Emmaus Homes

Troy, MO

When the COVID-19 pandemic prevented a man Mike supports from attending a camp he was devastated to miss, Mike stepped up to the plate. He worked with the man to plan a trip that included elements of the camp he most wanted to experience. With an itinerary set, they embarked on more than a vacation—it was a dream come true!

When the pandemic forced people to stay home, Mike supported people to plan and host safe barbecues and picnics. Because many of the people he supports were missing their families, Mike took the initiative to utilize technology to help fill the void. He took the time to set up various devices to function best for the individual needs of the people using them. From adjusting accessibility settings to researching adaptive modifications, Mike did what was necessary to ensure the people he supports could harness the power of technology.





Jennifer Herron



Congratulations,
Jennifer Herron, Direct Support
Professional of the Year, New York State!

In partnership with ANCOR, The Resource Center is proud to recognize your dedicated commitment to the people we support on a daily basis.

The Resource Center is honored to have you as a valuable member of our family.

On behalf of our employees, Board of Directors, the people we support, and their families, we salute YOU!

Thank you for all you do!

2022 New York DSP of the Year

Jennifer Herron

The Resource Center
Sinclairville, NY

Whether assisting with money management to fulfill a dream of purchasing a home or supporting the dream of motherhood, Jennifer works to ensure the people she supports achieve their biggest dreams and live their best, most meaningful lives.

Jennifer builds trust with the people she supports to discover what's most important to them. Her calm, judgment-free approach gives her the information she needs to present various scenarios in which they can accomplish their goals. No matter the choices they make, Jennifer commits to identifying the pathways, resources and supports required to transform the dreams of the people she supports into reality.



2022 North Carolina DSP of the Year

Florence Melvin

Dungarvin
Fayetteville, NC



Florence loves to ensure the people she supports are part of the community. Whether it's visiting The Salvation Army, participating in a Zumba class or playing Bingo, Florence encourages friendships and a sense of community.

But it's not all fun and games! One person Florence supports was intent on securing employment. She sprang into action to make them a standout candidate. She supported them to identify skills and complete applications, facilitated mock interviews, and helped build the confidence needed to be interview-ready. After a few months, their hard work and preparation paid off and the person landed a job at a local pizza joint. It has been four years now, and they're still happily employed there, thanks to Florence's inclusive supports!

2022 Ohio DSP of the Year

Stanley Adu-Gyamfi

Dungarvin
Columbus, OH

When COVID-19 stay-at-home orders prevented an individual Stanley supports from spending time with family, he sprang into action. Stanley devised several accommodations to ensure visits could occur safely within guidelines. One such accommodation included converting a garage into a mini living room so the individual's family could safely visit at a safe distance, protecting themselves and the other people Stanley supports.

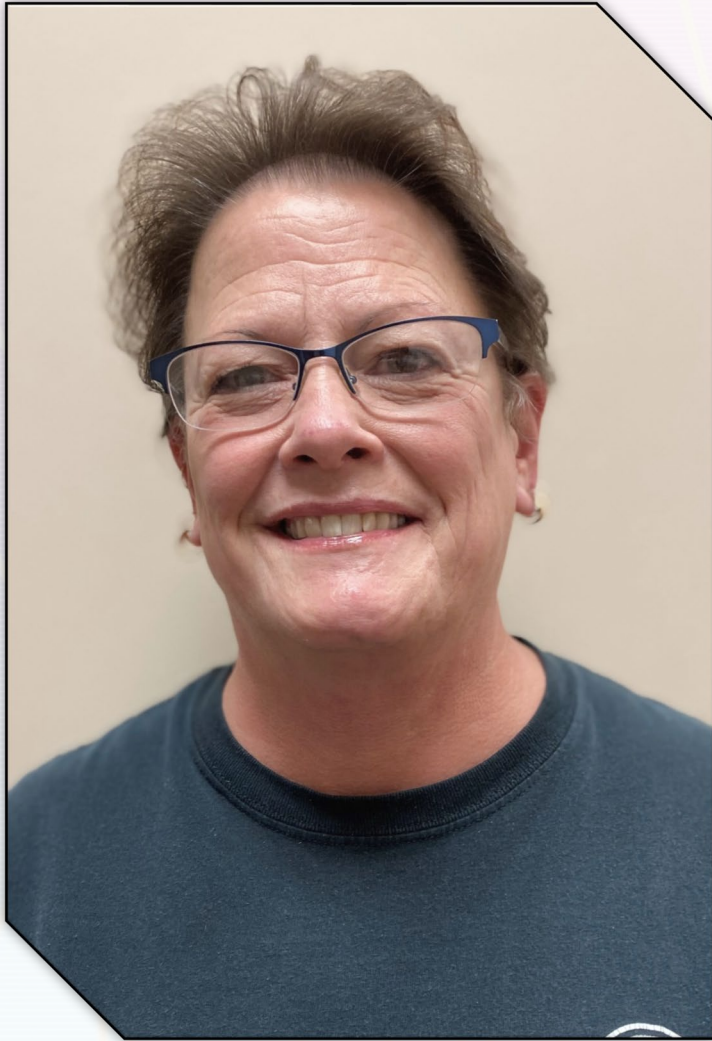
To help people continue to feel included in the community during this difficult time, Stanley planned car rides and walks around the neighborhood. When going to medical appointments was too risky, Stanley arranged for physicians to come to the home. This meant people continued to receive the medical care they needed and didn't miss a single appointment—despite some unprecedented challenges!



2022 Oklahoma DSP of the Year

Sheri Harris

Dungarvin
Paul's Valley, OK



Sheri is nothing if not handy! When she noticed someone she supports was having trouble using the doorknobs in the home where she works, Sheri took it upon herself to install newer, easier to use handles. On another occasion, Sheri supported people to widen their driveway for easier access. She also helped build a closet and a desk.

This handiness came in handy (pun intended!) when Sheri assisted someone she supports to purchase their first home. They worked together to review paint options and hire professionals to make sure the space was painted exactly as they envisioned. She also helped install a new kitchen and new flooring, and supported in the design of a closet area and new bookshelves! Sheri even made curtains for the windows to ensure the house would more swiftly feel like a home.

2022 Oregon DSP of the Year

Miranda Baugh

Community Support Services
Keizer, OR

During a local outbreak of COVID-19, Miranda began noticing a difference in the behaviors of someone she supported—someone who wasn't exhibiting symptoms, but was acting in an unusual manner. Miranda was able to track down resources to get the person tested to confirm whether they were COVID-positive. While awaiting the results, Miranda instituted a series of protocols that would allow the person to engage in activities that were important to them without putting others at risk.

With concerns about the pandemic at a peak, Miranda knew that as much as safety was important, it was equally important to make sure no one suffered from feelings of loneliness and isolation.



2022 Pennsylvania DSP of the Year

Brittany Brunson

Delta Community Supports
Philadelphia, PA



Brittany's nomination was so moving that we're sharing an excerpt because we couldn't have said it better ourselves. Jennifer, Brittany's supervisor, shared that "It is difficult to fully understand Brittany's accomplishments without viewing them in the context of the tragedies she endured during the COVID-19 pandemic. She never ceased to support the individuals at our Endfield home even after the death of her husband in 2020 and the tragic murder of her 16-year-old son in 2021.

It's almost impossible to imagine how a person could bring so much joy into the lives of others while dealing with these profound personal losses. In some ways, her work to create a family for [the people supported] at Endfield gave Brittany an outlet to transform grief into a life-affirming gift for others."

2022 Rhode Island DSP of the Year

David Asiedu

Community Living of Rhode Island
Narragansett, RI

David crafts his supports around the person-centered plans of the people he supports. If it's meaningful to them, it's meaningful to David. In one instance, David was able to uncover one man's childhood appreciation for firefighters and love of firetrucks.

The man's dream was to one day wear full firefighter gear and "toot the horn" on the firetruck. It wasn't an easy thing to pull off during a pandemic, but David knew he had to make it happen. He reached out to one of his firefighter friends and orchestrated the transformation of this dream into a reality! Together, David and his friend surprised the man with a visit to a local fire station where they had the opportunity to fulfill every aspect of the dream. They suited up in full firefighter gear and hopped inside the cab of the truck to toot the horn!



2022 South Carolina DSP of the Year

Dawanda Brown

Darlington County Disabilities & Special Needs Board
Hartsville, SC



Dawanda makes sure that everyone she supports can achieve their fullest potential. When an individual who uses a wheelchair expressed a desire to work, Dawanda helped support their search for a job with the proper accommodations. Eventually, they were able to secure a position after Dawanda encouraged the employer to build a workstation to help them more easily accomplish the key functions of their job.

Dawanda's constant monitoring of progress toward people's goals ensures that they are continuing to challenge themselves while also thinking ahead to bigger, loftier goals.

2022 South Dakota DSP of the Year

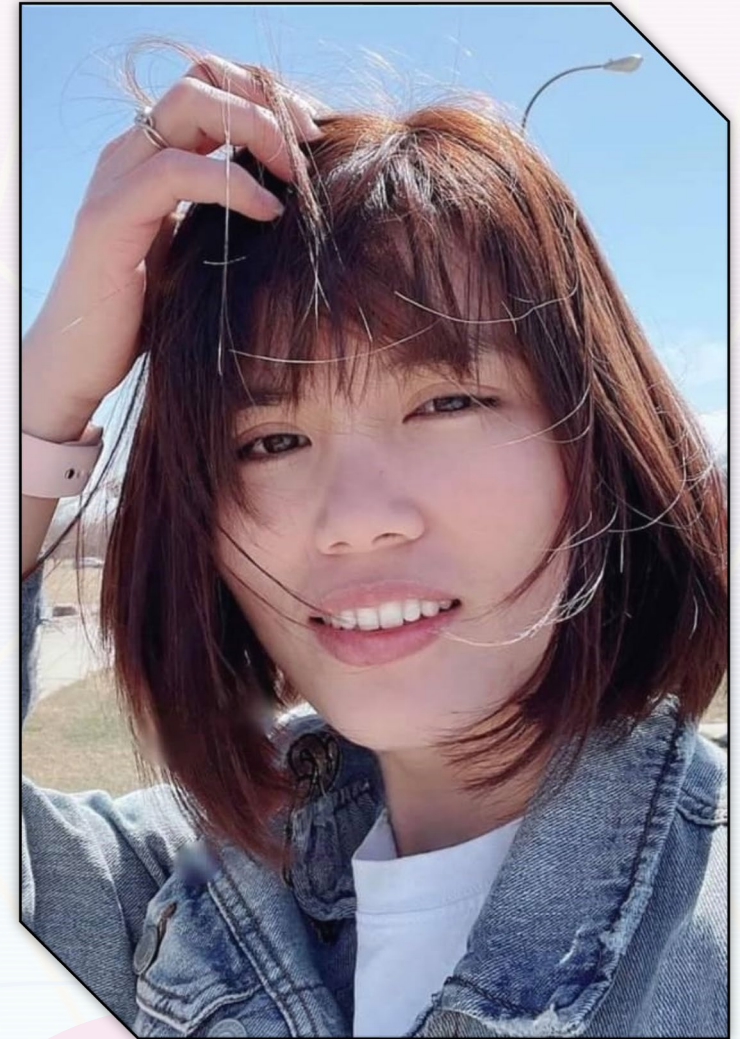
Hau Quan

Aspire, Inc.

Aberdeen, SD

Hau's deep experience as a DSP and her attentiveness to the people she supports allows her to notice any changes that may signal larger problems. One time, when someone she supports who communicates nonverbally began exhibiting discomfort, Hau jumped into action.

Hau and a colleague helped get the person to the ground, where Hau performed CPR while her colleague called 911. Hau continued to provide CPR until emergency responders arrived and took over. Thanks to Hau's urgent response and reaction in the critical moments before emergency responders could arrive, the individual's life was saved. Though it was a scary moment, Hau was unphased—as soon as the person was stabilized in the care of the paramedics, Hau calmly turned her attention toward calming the other people in the group who watched this intense situation unfold.



2022 Tennessee DSP of the Year Edward Copeland

Emory Valley Center
Oak Ridge, TN



Edward loves uncovering the desires for new experiences among the people he supports. His refusal to accept what others would see as limitations filters to the individuals he supports and helps them think of and achieve their goals. Once he determines what they would like to do and who they would like to spend time with, he does his very best to make it happen—just like the time he discovered one of the individuals had a love of horses.

With this discovery, Edward contacted local horse ranches to see if they would accommodate a visit. One ranch owner not only agreed, but was delighted! With Edward alongside, ranch staff took the people Edward supports on a tour of the barn and stalls, where they got to pet many of the horses on the property. It was an experience they'll never forget!

2022 Texas DSP of the Year

Isabel Diaz

BrightSpring Health Services
Santa Rosa, TX

When an individual Isabel supports was diagnosed with cancer, she volunteered to provide transportation to and from treatments—a whopping 660 miles away. Over the span of a month and at the recommendation of the person's oncologist, Isabel took them on the five-hour road trip three times.

On one trip, the hotel accommodations they had made fell through, and the person Isabel supports couldn't track down the hotel employee who processed the reservation. Rather than panic or drive back, which would have required delaying the treatment, Isabel started calling around. She was able to identify a family friend in the area who agreed to let them stay the night so the person Isabel supports didn't miss such a crucial appointment!



2022 Utah DSP of the Year

Collin Saltern

Chrysalis
Providence, UT



Collin is all about building relationships and having fun while doing it! A primary example is his famous annual Thanksgiving meals. Every year, Collin hosts his colleagues and the people he supports who don't have family with which to spend the holiday. He plans the entire event from menu to décor and works to make it a dedicated communal event that everyone can enjoy.

It has since turned into such a highly anticipated event that even staff who have moved onto other jobs return to visit former colleagues and the people they used to support. This event truly defines Collin's perspective and the approach he takes to individualizing supports. He's invested in making everyone feel connected, fulfilled and close, an approach that permeates throughout the organization as other DSPs follow his lead.

2022 Vermont DSP of the Year

Liza Bothfeld

Green Mountain Support Services
Hyde Park, VT

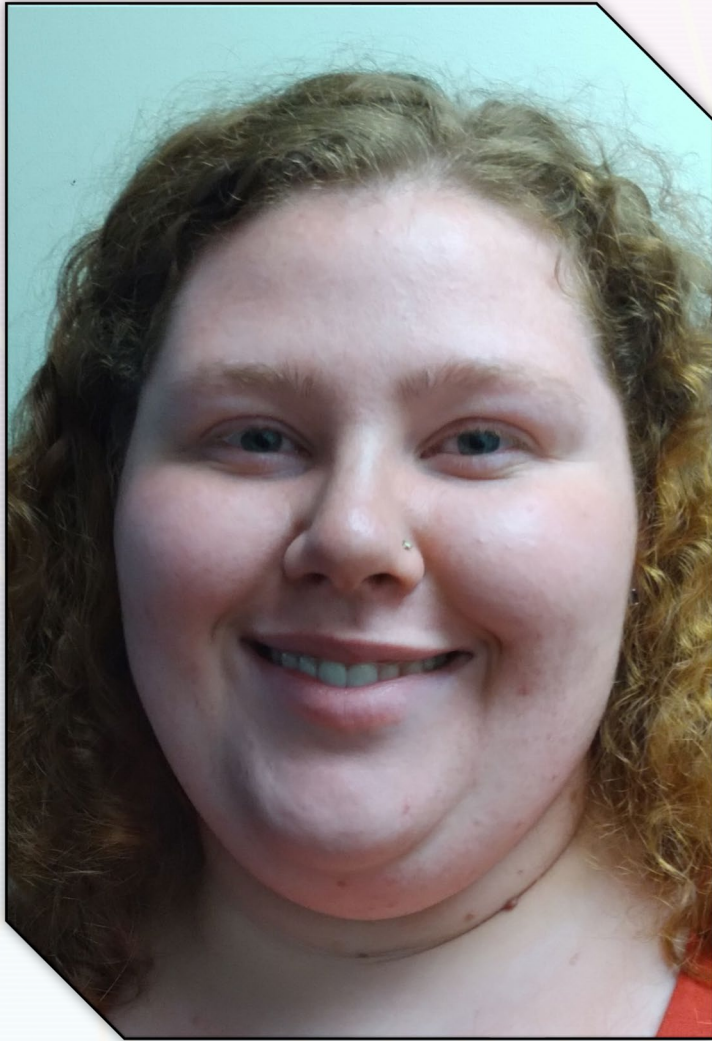
During COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, Liza ensured that not only were the people she supports safe, but that they could remain connected even while apart. She set up virtual *Wheel of Fortune* games for the people she supports and ensured everyone was able to play. The game gave many people something to look forward to at a time where each day seemed to blend into the next. It also gave people the chance to see and spend time with familiar faces.

Liza understands and supports the rights of the people she supports to engage in intimate relationships. She helps them manage intimate relationships appropriately and encourages best practices when those relationships do not work out. Supporting people to express and pursue their sexual needs can be uncomfortable to some, but Liza understands that it's necessary for people to live whole lives.



2022 Virginia DSP of the Year **Madison Landmesser**

Volunteers of America Chesapeake & Carolinas
Woodbridge, VA



One of the people Madison supports had a fairly restrictive behavior plan, but Madison's consistent approach has started yielding positive outcomes. In the past, the individual was known for refusing help and instruction, and would often respond with threats and yelling. Now, however, they're being redirected to more positive and productive behaviors.

By offering choices and educating the people she supports in making informed decisions, Madison empowers autonomy and responsibility. This approach has allowed her to move toward supporting individuals in a deeper ways. She's instituted nutritional meal programs that help the people she supports live healthier lives, and she supports them in virtual meetings with a chef to re-design their individualized menus according to their unique nutritional needs and tastes.

2022 Washington DSP of the Year

Shannon Ramsey

Northwest Center Kids
Burien, WA

Shannon was designing innovations for the people she supports long before COVID-19, but the pandemic only accelerated her creativity. She was an “early adopter” in terms of getting the people she supports online for check-ins before the pandemic, which made it simpler for her to segue into using Zoom for telemedicine visits and support plan meetings. Shannon also used digital games as tools to help people practice engaging online.

Shannon also used her creativity to put together job-related activities to keep people thinking about work, even as their workplaces were shut down. For example, she used word searches with terms related to their work as a method of coaching. She also set up remote coaching sessions and developed a presentation for her coworkers to learn her techniques and help her smart ideas reach more people.



2022 West Virginia DSP of the Year

Stephana Wilcox

Sevita
Mason, WV



Stephana enriches interaction with others by encouraging the people she supports to attend group activities and family gatherings. She has organized parties and loves getting people to participate in activities such as camping, bowling and exercising.

Stephana also pays attention to people's whole health. For example, one person she supports requires a low-fat, low-calorie diet, so Stephana took time to uncover their favorite recipes. She used this information to create personal recipe sheets that included calories to make it easier to track. She helps the person grocery shop based on the recipes they choose and she encourages them to exercise, including by helping find an exercise partner to make the process more enjoyable. Thanks to Stephana's supports, they're thriving in their nutritional and fitness goals, and the results are evident!

2022 Wisconsin DSP of the Year

Laura Nelson

Dungarvin
Reedsburg, WI

One of the people Laura supports has a Fetal Alcohol Syndrome diagnosis. To determine the best methods of communication with this person, Laura found training materials on communication styles specific to their diagnosis. She then took it a step further to understand which proposed interventions were best so she could craft her supports around them.

Laura used the knowledge gained to implement direct and straightforward communication in the home, and encouraged others to do the same to ensure consistency. The change in communication style had a noticeable impact, as it helped alleviate behavioral challenges and provided a sense of comfort. The individual has stated that they feel this has helped to build trust with staff and allowed them to feel comfortable reaching out for support in times of crisis.



Congratulations to all of the DSP of the Year Award winners.

Thank you for your hard work,
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