Recognizing Excellence 2025

Honoring the 2025 Class of Outstanding Direct Support Professionals





Congratulations to all the DSP of the Year Award winners.

Thank you for your hard work, dedication, and exemplary service.

As an ANCOR Diamond Partner, Relias is proud to recognize the amazing work DSPs do to support individuals in meaningful ways.





Thank You, Direct Support Professionals!

A Letter from ANCOR's Leadership

To the many outstanding DSPs and everyone who advocates on their behalf:

Thank you for your deep commitment to the vital work of supporting people with disabilities to live full and meaningful lives. It is more important now than ever before that we do all we can to address the direct support workforce crisis.

Over the past few years, we've finally seen signs of progress in stemming the tide of high turnover as pandemic-era funding enabled sorely needed investments in our services. But as temporary funding expires and as lawmakers weigh significant cuts to Medicaid, the workforce crisis is at risk of becoming much worse.

Nevertheless, we have heard countless stories of love, resilience and tremendous devotion. These intangible attributes are the backbone of life-saving, life-sustaining, and life-enhancing supports.

To showcase these stories and reinforce our message of the need to invest more deeply in direct support professionals, we are delighted to honor dozens of the nation's leading DSPs with our annual DSP of the Year Awards. This year, our judging panel had the impossible task of selecting 54 professionals from among more than 500 incredible nominations.

The stories you'll read in this publication highlight the numerous ways in which direct support professionals enable people with disabilities to live meaningful lives through community inclusion and person-centered supports. The stories of this year's honorees showcase a variety of accomplishments: innovations that help people achieve a range of goals, person-centered supports that create or reignite meaningful personal relationships, leadership that supports organizations to deliver better services more efficiently, and so much more.

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

On behalf of the entire ANCOR community, **THANK** YOU TO OUR DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS!

Sincerely,

Barbara Merrill CEO / ANCOR



Lori KressPresident / ANCOR Board of Directors

2025 National DSP of the Year

Mickey Whitesell

Trinity Services / New Lenox, IL

Five years ago, Mickey was working as a chef in a restaurant impacted by COVID-19 closures. This ignited a career change, and Mickey began his career as a Day Services DSP and his future vocation of helping others.

Mickey is passionate about assisting the people he supports to maximize their independence. This past election year, he built a voting box and created mock ballots to prepare people for the voting experience. He even facilitated a trip to the county clerk's office to expand people's voter rights knowledge and connect with their local legislators. Mickey helped people identify issues such as disability rights, inclusion, advocacy, and expressing personal choices and preferences. Mickey supports a Speak Up Speak Out (SUSO) group and facilitates discussions leading up to the annual SUSO event, as well as holding post-event discussions about advocacy.



In addition to centering the rights and self-advocacy of those he supports, Mickey is also very involved in DSP advocacy, encouraging other DSPs and community members to sign witness slips, contact their legislators, and educate the community about disability issues and the DSP profession. Mickey's roots in the city where he lives and his previous career as a chef helped him reach a broad community of supporters that otherwise would not have been connected to the DSP advocacy movement.

Mickey's innovative spirit (and his skills as a former chef!) have led to a transformation in healthy eating and creativity for the people supported by the Community Day Services (CDS) program. First, Mickey converted old shipping totes, which would otherwise become a waste product, into planter boxes. The CDS program participants then created large vegetable gardens by starting seedlings in the boxes and nurtured them until they flourished into a variety of delectable healthy foods. Mickey then created a robust culinary experience that lasts all harvest season long. People supported pickle vegetables, make soups, and create full meals. At the end of the season, they have a harvest fest that features a special soup utilizing many of the crops that they grew together. And, utilizing his brewing skills, Mickey and the people he supports create house-made root beer, ginger ale, and flavored sodas. These are custom and people enjoy experimenting with different additives to achieve various complex flavors! Mickey greets visitors to CDS with samples and participants delight in seeing which ones people enjoy most. All of these activities are more successful due to Mickey's hard work, specialized knowledge, and unwavering enthusiasm.

Congratulations to the

ANCOR 2025 NATIONAL DSP OF THE YEAR!

Mickey Whitesell is an exceptional DSP, a compassionate and caring individual who provides the essential services and support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and behavioral health needs every day.

His incredible dedication and unwavering desire to always go the extra mile for the people he supports makes Mickey an extraordinary member of the Trinity Services' team. We are proud to honor Mickey for his well-deserved selection as the ANCOR 2025 National DSP of the Year!

Thank you to all of our amazing DSPs for living the Trinity mission every day: providing the highest quality person-directed services and supports to people with disabilities and mental health needs so that they may flourish and lead full and abundant lives.

A special thanks to ANCOR for having the vision to recognize not only Mickey Whitesell, but all of our DSPs over the years.



ANCOR's National Partners are proud to congratulate the recipients of ANCOR's 2025 Direct Support Professional of the Year Awards. Thank you, DSPs!

DIAMOND PARTNERS









PLATINUM PARTNERS







GOLD PARTNERS





























BRONZE PARTNERS









2025 Special Category Award: Leadership

Adella Altamirano

Sevita / Maryland Heights, MO

It seems there's no occasion to which Adella won't rise. When one of the women she supports disappeared in the middle of the night, Adella and her team worked tirelessly with local authorities to find her. Adella was instrumental in discovering that the woman had traveled from Missouri to Florida with a man she met on Facebook. Because of Adella's guidance, support and encouragement, her team was not only successful in bringing the woman home, but they also helped uncover a human trafficking scheme.

But Adella's leadership doesn't stop there. As one of the first people in Missouri to complete training to become a Tools for Choice Coach, Adella has been pivotal in the implementation of her agency's Tiered Supports program. As Tiered Supports Team Lead, she has taken on additional workload and is responsible for scheduling and participating statewide meetings.

Adella's knack for going above and beyond is evident to all who get to know her and key to delivering the highest-quality supports.



Sevita.

Congratulations to our outstanding team members

Thank you for your commitment to helping others and making a difference in the lives of the people we serve.



Adella Altamirano Missouri Mentor



LaJayda Clayton
Bridges of Montana



Lindsey Couch
Bridges of Wyoming



Nikki Gray
REM North Dakota



Josh Quichocho REM Mississippi



Karen Tipton
Alabama Mentor



Wesley Willcutt
REM Wisconsin



Serkalem "Mimi" Yalew
Bridges and Tungland

2025 Special Category Award: Leadership

Andrew Woods

Fayette Resources / Uniontown, PA

Andrew has worked with Fayette Resources for over 17 years. When Andrew first began working, few of the staff knew ASL, and while certain adaptations were made, those who interacted with Deaf individuals most often couldn't communicate fully using ASL.

Andrew, seeing the transformative power of communication, spearheaded an initiative to bring ASL training to the DSPs who worked with Deaf clients, with the support of his supervisor. Andrew embraced this training wholeheartedly, becoming fluent in ASL and mentoring his coworkers as they studied and began using ASL with clients. His dedication has encouraged others to not only learn the language but actively use it daily, giving Jeremy, and others, a renewed sense of connection. With a now-expanded vocabulary and surrounded by DSPs who can communicate in his language, the Deaf clients Andrew supports are once again engaging fully and openly communicating with others using the communication style they prefer.







A world of opportunities

Congratulations! Andrew Woods

ANCOR 2025 Special Category Award: Leadership

Fayette Resources proudly celebrates Andrew Woods, recipient of the ANCOR Leadership Award! For over 17 years, Andrew has gone above and beyond, providing personcentered support with compassion, dedication, and advocacy. His leadership and commitment to inclusion have changed lives, and we are so grateful for all that he does!

2025 Special Category Award: Person-Centeredness

Kellie Johnson

Johnson County Developmental Supports / Lenexa, KS

Kellie has worked for Johnson County Developmental Supports (JCDS) since May 1997—totaling nearly 28 years of dedication to the people she supports at JCDS! Kellie has an uncanny ability to meet the people she serves where they need her.

Kellie recently assisted an individual with obtaining a medication machine. Through consistent teaching and training, the individual can now effectively selfadminister her own medications. Kellie assisted another person who was struggling to catch the bus and was frequently late for work. Kellie implemented a system where he had alarms throughout his morning routines to increase his independence and help him complete tasks. This individual would notify Kellie directly by a certain time, indicating he was ready. If Kellie did not hear from him, then she would check to assure that he was ready. As a result, this individual has not had any issues recently getting to work on time, largely due to Kellie's supports.





Congratulations Kellie Johnson

Congratulations to Senior Direct
Support Professional, Kellie Johnson.
Thank you for always being an advocate
for the people we support. Your hard
work and dedication provides people
with opportunities to be indepenent
and live their best lives.



2025 Special Category Award: Relationships

Daryllyn Ward

Living Resources / Albany, NY

Daryllyn excels in fostering relationships that empower individuals to explore and expand their networks. She regularly organizes group activities, such as a Women's Group, which creates a safe space for participants to connect, share experiences, and build friendships. These gatherings promote camaraderie, support, and lasting bonds. Additionally, Daryllyn implements teambuilding sessions that involve both staff and those supported, enhancing collaboration and trust. These sessions not only strengthen relationships within the group but also cultivate an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and heard.

Daryllyn's holistic approach to relationship-building enhances individuals' support networks, providing them with a richer social experience. Through her dedication to these initiatives, Daryllyn empowers individuals to explore and enhance their social and familial connections, contributing significantly to their overall well-being and happiness.



2025 Alabama DSP of the Year

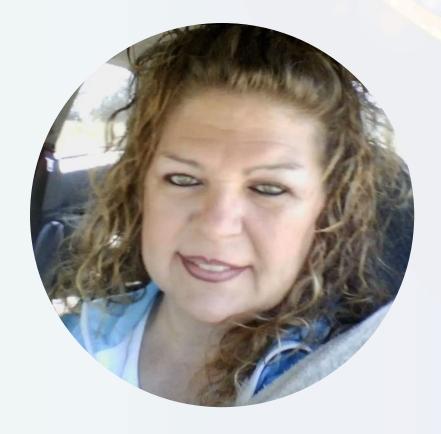
Karen Tipton

Sevita / Montgomery, AL

Karen is a group home manager and even in times of staffing shortages, she has shown up and exceptionally managed the multiple homes she helps oversee. Karen often acts as a trainer for new program supervisors.

Karen can also be found working to ensure new hires are familiar with all company and house processes, and she has trained three new program supervisors in just a four-month period.

The staff and supervisors at Karen's agency have the utmost respect for her, her knowledge, and her dedication to the people they serve. She has taken on multiple homes with additional responsibilities amidst staffing issues—because her main concern is that the individuals are cared for and happy no matter the location. Karen has been a rock for her agency, demonstrating consistent leadership even during difficult times.



2025 Alaska DSP of the Year

Brian Ormond

South Peninsula Behavioral Health Services / Homer, AK

Brian has dedicated countless hours toward system change on behalf of the DSP workforce. He has played a formative role in the creation of the Alaska Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (AADSP). This past year, the state provider association used grant funds to pay Brian to facilitate a series of online meetings with DSPs across the state to use their input to make a guidebook for providers on how to create a more DSP-centered organization.

DSPs across the state shared they wanted to connect more easily. Brian created a Discord server and partnered with other AADSP leaders to develop the interface with different options like a video library and a space for confidential peer support conversations. In Alaska, where DSPs work in villages off the road system or for agencies based a thousand miles apart, the idea of a shared online space for DSPs is pioneering and includes DSPs who haven't previously been included in statewide discussions.



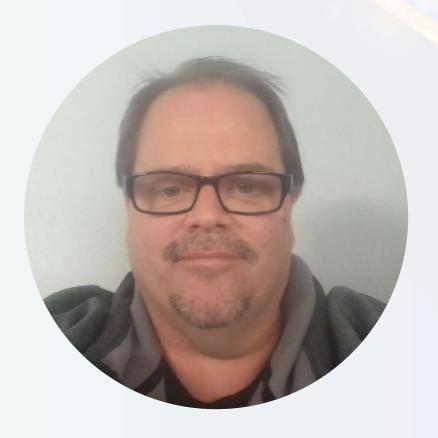
2025 Arizona DSP of the Year

Brad Wimmer

Abrio Living / Phoenix, AZ

Recognizing the importance of technology, Brad has incorporated digital tools to assist those he supports in job applications and skill development. He organizes workshops that teach them how to use online resources effectively, equipping them with essential skills for future employment. This innovative approach not only prepares them for the workforce but also empowers them to take charge of their own job searches.

Moreover, Brad frequently seeks feedback from both members and staff to improve programs and services. He hosts regular brainstorming sessions where everyone can share ideas, ensuring that the support provided is responsive to the evolving needs of the members. Through these innovative practices, Brad not only enriches the lives of the individuals he supports but also fosters an environment of continuous improvement and creativity, setting a standard for excellence in direct support.



CONGRATULATIONS, KEVIN SALVADOR!

ANCOR 2025

Direct Support Professional of the Year for California

Thank you for your dedication to the residents of Noah Homes.

Every day, Kevin goes above and beyond to ensure that our residents live their best lives. His passion for providing exceptional care is palpable in all he does, from working on the floor in direct care, to training new staff members, and conducting management duties. He is creative and detailed, and has cultivated a loving, collaborative environment where both staff and residents are fully engaged.



Noah Homes' mission is to provide exceptional residential care for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Learn more about our social model of care and community by visiting **NoahHomes.org** or scanning the QR code.





2025 California DSP of the Year

Kevin Salvador

Noah Homes / Spring Valley, CA

Kevin recently went above and beyond for a person he supports whose health was declining.

This individual, who had previously been very independent, had a girlfriend that he would call each day at 7 pm to talk for hours and hours. This was a routine he and his girlfriend kept up for more than 20 years at the same time each day because she didn't live in the same area as him.

When the man's health deteriorated, he lost the ability to talk on the phone, which meant he lost that critical connection to the woman he loved. Seeing how important that connection as the man neared the end of his life, Kevin stepped up and sprang into action, making arrangements for the man to visit his girlfriend several times. The man unfortunately passed away after that, but by honoring that special relationship, Kevin was able to make sure the man felt connected and loved throughout his very last days.



2025 Colorado DSP of the Year Mini Yalew

Sevita / Aurora, CO

Mimi has demonstrated personal and professional leadership through her exceptional dedication and proactive approach in her role as a host home provider. Mimi's hands-on, adaptable approach to care reflects her leadership in managing the needs of those she supports effectively and compassionately. Mimi also steps up to support her peers by being available for respite and emergency situations, which illustrates her readiness to contribute beyond her immediate responsibilities.

Moreover, by making home renovations and tailoring her care to each person's needs, Mimi leads by example in creating a high-quality living environment that promotes independence and well-being. Her ongoing commitment to learning and adapting her methods highlights her role as a mentor and leader in her field.



2025 Connecticut DSP of the Year

Kevin Brandolini

Lumibility / Westbrook, CT

Kevin recently supported self-advocates when they were invited to speak to a medical panel of professionals. Kevin supported them during the panel by encouraging them to express their feelings on how they feel when attending medical appointments, in hopes to seek change for the future of how doctors interact with people with disabilities during medical appointments. Kevin has also assisted with enhancing the skills of those he serves by connecting them with community partnerships ranging from employment to volunteer to advocacy opportunities. Kevin spends time driving an individual to the state capitol so that they can participate in advocacy work, advocating for increased funding for nonprofits.

Kevin has also taken the initiative to train new employees on how to properly write progress notes, complete mileage, use company software, and more.



CONGRATULATIONS!

Direct Support Professionals' role in supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live independently and participate in their communities is vital. Mosaic's award-winning Direct Support Professionals are passionate and committed to providing highly personalized services tailored to the individuals they serve, helping them achieve the goals and desires that matter to them.

Mosaic is proud to celebrate two ANCOR Award winners who represent the thousands of Mosaic Direct Support Professionals serving in more than 750 communities across 12 states. For them, their important work is not a job—it's a calling.

Thank you Danielle Kirlin and Regina Gitongu for furthering Mosaic's purpose to love and serve.



Real life. Real possibilities.







2025 Delaware DSP of the Year

Regina Gitongu

Mosaic / Newark, DE

Regina exemplifies the meaning of respect and dignity. She stepped in and took action when a person she supported lost his job after having worked with his employer for over 10 years.

Regina helped him by discussing the importance of developing a resume so that he could start his search for employment. Regina showed him several formats and he was able to develop his very own resume for the first time.

Regina continued to support him by practicing how to respond in interviews and discussed the importance of asking questions. One day, he went to an interview at the University of Delaware. He met with the recruiter and completed an interview. Within a week, he was offered a job. This person was able to achieve his dream of obtaining employment because of the support and guidance that Regina provided.



2025 District of Columbia DSP of the Year

Barbara Smith

National Children's Center / Washington, DC

Barbara joined NCC in 2014 and each day since has exemplified excellence. Barbara brings a unique skill set to her role, including proficiency in American Sign Language (ASL). She takes it upon herself to engage more individuals in ASL, fostering deeper connections and enhancing communication.

Technology plays a significant role in the home where Barbara works, with features like videophone systems, illuminated door signals and Alexa devices enhancing daily life. Barbara has been instrumental in creating an environment where technology feels second nature. She encourages individuals to see these tools as helpful rather than daunting, ensuring they can fully participate in all experiences. Thanks to Barbara's innovative approach, technology has become a bridge that connects the people she supports to the world around them.



2025 Florida DSP of the Year

Britany Jackson

Sunrise Community / Cape Coral, FL

Britany is dedicated to fostering and strengthening meaningful relationships for the individuals they support.

In addition to their unwavering dedication and compassion, Britany is also highly innovative and never settles when developing creative solutions. Britany revamped the team's documentation system, creating a user-friendly digital template that reduced reporting time by 30%.

Recently, Britany introduced personalized social stories, using images and narratives to prepare clients for new experiences, from medical appointments to community outings. This approach has significantly reduced anxiety and improved engagement, making challenging transitions easier for people supported.



2025 Georgia DSP of the Year

Toya Stinson

River Edge Behavioral Health / Macon, GA

In her over 12 years of working at River Edge, Toya is a leader among her peers. This past year, Toya took the initiative to be a mentor for two staff through the DSP Apprenticeship program with Georgia's Department of Labor. She also has ensured year after year that a trio of men she supports get to go on vacation.

One recent trip was the Walt Disney World vacation where she arranged for these three men (one who doesn't use words to speak and uses a catheter, one who is blind, and one who has trouble communicating) to stay on property and visit all four parks (Animal Kingdom, Epcot, Magic Kingdom and Hollywood Studios) in 2 days. These individuals had the best time, largely because of Toya's steadfast support, and are looking forward to their next out-of-state adventure together.



2025 Hawaii DSP of the Year Ian Kow

Full Life / Hilo, HI

lan is known for earning the trust of everyone they work with. They approach every situation with kindness and ensure a high standard of service. Ian has been a driving force behind the success of the Hilo Inclusive Canoe Club, which emerged from a participant's heartfelt dream to become more involved in the community and engage in water activities. This initiative fulfills individual aspirations and fosters a sense of belonging and teamwork.

Ian has also played a pivotal role in the "We Are One: Unity and Inclusion Club" at Full Life. This club celebrates diversity and inclusivity, ensuring that every participant feels valued and has the opportunity to contribute. Ian's work with the people he supports and the connections they've been able to foster within the community shows how even just one person can ignite a collective passion for inclusivity and community development.



2025 Idaho DSP of the Year Halle Beal

Milestone Decisions / Moscow, ID

Hallie is a one-of-a-kind DSP who never gives up and hardly slows down (except on her weekly self-care day). She'll do anything for those she supports, and she's done so for many years. Hallie has joined the people she supports on countless community engagement events, including our annual, week-long advocacy trip to the Idaho State Capitol in Boise. There, Hallie and the people she supports attended LINC's Self-Advocacy and Leadership Training (SALT), where they learned about current issues in the I/DD field and how to advocate to decisionmakers using powerful storytelling. The next day, Hallie went to the Capitol building to stand (and sit) face-to-face with several Idaho legislators and share our experiences and those of the individuals we support. Hallie bravely advocated on behalf of her client (who could not verbally express their own experiences) with both great pride and great humility, as always.



2025 Illinois DSP of the Year

Andrea Smith

BrightSpring Health Services / Murphysboro, IL

Andrea is a strong DSP who shares her excellent work routines with others. Andrea thoroughly trains new staff to make sure they can best support clients. Andrea will not hesitate to be an advocate for anything her clients need. She will not stop pushing for change if she feels there is an unmet need!

Andrea has obtained her Certified Nursing Assistant certification and made a personal choice to continue working as a DSP. She considers the people she supports like her family and wants to make sure they receive the best care. Andrea also volunteers to train all new staff. She knows that consistency will help ensure all new staff are in the know by being trained in the same manner.



2025 Indiana DSP of the Year

Rose Musgrave

Dungarvin / Chesterton, IN

Rose has been a Direct Support Professional for 13 years and stands out as a leader within her organization. Rose has informally taken on the role of a mentor, especially to new DSPs who are adjusting to the demands of the position. Rose's willingness to share insights, offer advice, and patiently assist colleagues has led to a more supportive and knowledgeable team environment at the home.

Moreover, Rose consistently advocates for DSPs in team meetings, bringing forward suggestions that improve support structures. She has contributed to discussions on how to enhance training for new staff members, ensuring they feel better equipped for their roles. Rose's initiative in advocating for both her peers and the individuals in her care highlights her exceptional leadership qualities.



2025 Iowa DSP of the Year

Joseph Goltl

UI REACH at the University of Iowa / Iowa City, IA

Joseph is a second year University of Iowa REACH Resident Assistant. In his time as a REACH RA he has fostered growth, built relationships, and done all that he can to build the social skills and independent living skills of the UI REACH Students.

He hosts an event each week titled 'Jaunts with Joe' in which the students take walks with him around the lowa City area to explore, learn more about their peers, and experience nature. In these Jaunts, Joe creates a fun and inclusive environment where the students feel comfortable talking to their peers, supported in asking questions, and confident to be themselves. Additionally, Joe is consistently working with the non–UI REACH RAs in his dorm to plan activities that all students could enjoy and attend. When doing this, he reaches out to campus and community partners to create partnerships, while always keeping the students front of mind.



2025 Kansas DSP of the Year

Frankie Pelster

Rosewood Services / Great Bend, KS

Throughout her 14-year career as a DSP, Frankie has positively impacted hundreds of lives. She has worked tirelessly to get folks with disabilities employed in the workforce, and through organized advocacy, she has encouraged them to be active in their communities.

Many employers and civic leaders look to her for input and direction when it comes to how they can empower people with disabilities. When Frankie took over the Employment Network Program at Rosewood Services in 2015, it was doing okay, but she quickly turned the program into something extra special. Within a few years, Rosewood Services was leading the way in the state of Kansas for successfully placing people with disabilities into the area workforce. Utilizing two programs within the Rosewood Employment Network, nearly 60 people now work, or are in job-search mode within the program.





ROSEWOOD PROUD

Congratulations to Frankie Pelster, KANSAS' 2025 DSP of the YEAR!

Frankie is a uniquely genuine person, employee, friend, and advocate for people with disabilities. She never hesitates to give of herself to make others' lives better, easier and fuller. She operates on the premise that everyone matters.

If a job needs to be done, Frankie will make it happen.

From all of us at ROSEWOOD ...
Thank you, Frankie, for your exceptional service, passion, and dedication in helping those we serve to "CELEBRATE LIFE!"

RosewoodServices.com



Vicki Eizenstat

Al Case Management / Danville, KY

Vicki has been the primary DSP to Chris for over 20 years. Vicki assists him in making dog biscuits for his company, and they deliver the biscuits to a local coffee shop and vet's office and sell them at local community events. Vicki and Chris deliver Meals on Wheels together to community members on Mondays, where Chris hands the food to the recipients. Each recipient enjoys Chris's smile and enjoys that relationship. Vicki steps back and says little so the recipients connect with Chris.

The businesses that buy his biscuits look forward to seeing Chris bring the biscuits to refill their supply. Vicki also supports him to engage with the activities of the local Parks and Recreation Program, and together they attend the selfadvocacy group, Chesser Advocacy Group, each month. Chris has a life that consists of contributing to society, owning a business and engaging in fun activities, which his family says is largely due to Vicki's support.



2025 Louisiana DSP of the Year Cheri Breland

BrightSpring Health Services / Mandeville, LA

Cheri deeply understands and lives out her organization's goals and mission statement.

Cheri worked for 2.5 years to help a person she supports obtain her citizenship, which was a very important goal to this individual. Cheri accompanied her on numerous 138-mile round trips to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office in their area.

Cheri assisted the woman she supports with paperwork and preparing for her citizenship interview. Cheri was also there as her client accomplished her dream and took her oath to become a citizen. Cheri embodies personcentered supports every day.





Shawna Ferris

ANCOR 2025 DSP of the Year for Maine



"Everything is possible when you are determined and committed. Congratulations, Shawna. You are an inspiration to us all!"

www.ohimaine.org

OHI provides essential support to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We inspire people to recognize possibilities and lead meaningful lives. Contact us today to learn more about our services.

2025 Maine DSP of the Year

Shawna Ferris

OHI / Bangor, ME

Shawna has worked as a DSP for the past 14 years, and as House Manager the past four years. Shawna always looks for the absolute best in people she supports.

Shawna's staunch advocacy of a man she supports assisted him in becoming included in the gay community. She accompanied him to LGBTQ+ pride events and researched resources for him in the local community to explore opportunities to connect with others who share his sexual orientation. When he expressed a desire to wear makeup, she took him shopping for the supplies he wanted and educated him on proper application. The person moved to another home and Shawna discovered he was unhappy there when she went to check on how he was doing. She championed his return to his previous home where he was comfortable and established meaningful relationships with the support staff there.



2025 Maryland DSP of the Year Christal Lovelist

Penn-Mar Human Services / Freeland, MD

An exceptional, yet humble DSP, Christal's passion is contagious to all as she selflessly helps the people she supports at the Day Program achieve the things that matter most to them. Whether it's community engagement activities like her Cooking Club, Paint and Sip Parties, or her Beauty & Self Care Club, Christal is constantly recruiting and engaging staff who have a passion to make programs more personcentered.

She uses her Cooking Club to take groups out to the food store where she teaches them basic life skills, how to interact with other shoppers, and how to find and select food, compare prices and handle the payment transaction at checkout. Recently, she enrolled in the Career Ladders Program to enhance her skills and earn her professional credentials.



Congratulations! CHRISTAL LOVELIST

ANCOR'S 2025 MARYLAND DSP OF THE YEAR



You are an inspiration for all of us, and the perfect example of what it means to live courageously!



2025 Massachusetts DSP of the Year Vian Nieves

Advocates, Inc. / Framingham, MA

Vian has been directly delivering an outstanding level of dedicated service for over 10 years to three individuals with intellectual disabilities, who also have complex medical challenges. Vian is someone who has his finger on the pulse of the program at all times with compassion and dedication. Vian is the human rights officer for the program and is an outspoken advocate for those that he supports.

Recently, he led his peers to assist a long-term resident through the end-of-life process. Though extremely difficult, Vian held steady in his caring support for the gentleman as well as supporting his peers through it. Vian insisted the resident's voice and wishes were heard and respected, and he ensured that the resident's cherished friend was able to stay with him through the very end. Vian's relationships with the residents are everything families and parents want for their loved ones.



2025 Michigan DSP of the Year

Amari Bates

BrightSpring Health Services / Saginaw, MI

Amari is hardworking and energetic and promotes a welcoming space for those she supports. She wants them to have all the things she would like to have as a human being. Amari is a leader among her colleagues and takes new hires under her wing and shows them the correct procedures.

Amari also holds her coworkers accountable for the services they provide. She reviews her coworkers' documentation at the end of her shift, and if there is a discrepancy on what they wrote, she will guide them on the correct way to document it. Amari promotes a welcoming, can-do environment. She leads by example, with a smile on her face and no complaining. She gets things done. She has an easygoing spirit about her that clients seem to gravitate toward—which is evident in everyone's reactions when Amari is around.



2025 Minnesota DSP of the Year

Gloria Fahnbulleh

Hammer & NER / Wayzata, MN

Gloria is instrumental in helping her program exceed expectations. Gloria engages the women she supports in productive activities and personal goals by planning outings and making them aware of community events. She organizes experiences through Project SOAR for the ladies to participate in movie night with pizza, pop, and a picture show, and game night by playing bingo with others in the community, where they get to socialize and meet new friends.

Gloria collaborates during staff meetings and makes suggestions that can better support the people she serves. Gloria has received warm compliments from other residential managers that make her organization proud of her work ethic—not only here but also in the community.



Congratulations Gloria Fahnbulleh

ANCOR's 2025 Minnesota Direct Support Professional of the Year!





Providing people with intellectual and other disabilities the opportunity to live life to its fullest.

On behalf of the Hammer & NER family, thank you for all that you do to put the people we support first. We are thrilled to celebrate this achievement with you.

You are a shining example of how compassion, dedication, and personcenteredness can empower those we serve to live more meaningful and self-directed lives. You have not only touched the lives of those you support—you inspire everyone around you.



2025 Mississippi DSP of the Year

Josh Quichocho

Sevita / Flowood, MS

Josh regularly finds, plans, and takes the individuals he supports to participate in community events that they enjoy.

One time, Josh arranged for everyone from our three local houses to attend a parade together and packed a juice and snack for all the houses.

Josh is always willing to help out with other houses and their teams if needed. There have been several times he invites the other individuals to participate in new community activities, such as a community volunteer event at a local cemetery, homecoming activities, local events, and bowling. Josh is very much a team player. He is a great communicator and trainer. Josh is positive, patient, fair, firm, and consistent in his leadership.



2025 Missouri DSP of the Year

Samantha Brooks

Easterseals Midwest / St. Louis, MO

Samantha's advocacy ensures the people she supports receive essential care, her leadership fosters an inclusive, uplifting work culture, and her creativity enriches individual experiences, exemplifying the core values of our organization. As co-host of the Individual Engagement Committee for Springfield and Bolivar, she leads a group of self-advocates with disabilities who actively shape the direction of her organization. By providing individuals with opportunities to advocate for themselves, Samantha fosters an environment where they feel heard and valued.

In addition to her technical knowledge, Samantha brings a calm, steady presence that others rely on, especially in challenging situations. By fostering a culture of respect, collaboration, and continuous learning, Samantha's leadership inspires confidence, motivates others, and strengthens the community at Easterseals Midwest.

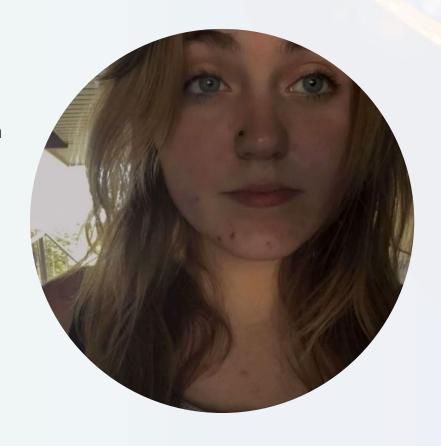


2025 Montana DSP of the Year

LaJayda Clayton

Sevita / Billings, MT

LaJayda's resilience and expertise make her a trusted advocate, excelling in support for those with complex needs. LaJayda is deeply committed to fostering meaningful relationships for the individuals she supports. Recently, one of the people she supports reconnected with a long-lost family member—a situation fraught with complex emotions and team concerns. LaJayda's compassionate and steady support helped this person center his desires and his well-being in the situation. But LaJayda's dedication extends beyond her responsibilities found in her job description. She consistently goes the extra mile for everyone in her program, bringing positivity, encouragement, and a sense of community to all those around her. LaJayda is an invaluable asset to her team, exemplifying the qualities of an exceptional leader and compassionate caregiver to every person she supports.



2025 Nebraska DSP of the Year Daniele Kirlin

Mosaic / Omaha, NE

Danielle is all about helping to build individualized programs and care plans for the people she supports. She knows that personcenteredness is vital to a dynamic and fulfilled life and makes it her business to deliver those supports. Whether it's helping to coach music or dance performers through a bit of stage fright, or building camaraderie through Halloween parties, Danielle empowers those she supports to live vibrant lives.

She even makes connections with other nearby Mosaic locations and encourages individuals to attend events together, such as the Nebraska State Fair. Danielle does all this and manages to be acknowledged as a leader among her coworkers. She teaches a behavioral crisis interaction training, where she guides her peers patiently through exercises so they develop the skills to grow their capacity as Direct Support Professionals.





Rose Musgrave Indiana



Nevada



Congratulations to our 2025 DSP of the **Year Winners!**

RESPECT | RESPONSE | CHOICE www.dungarvin.com



Fatmata Bayoh **New Jersey**



New Mexico

Earlean Rivers North Carolina



Nikkita Lightsey **Oklahoma**

2025 Nevada DSP of the Year

Diane Butler

Dungarvin / Las Vegas, NV

Family turned caregiver is one of the most difficult journeys to endure. After her daughter was diagnosed with a terminal illness, Diane worked hard to meet all Dungarvin's training requirements to become her at-home provider. Her daughter is often fearful and uncertain about what is happening to her, but Diane helps uplift her spirits and keeps her engaged with family and, when she's up for it, the community.

It can be difficult to compartmentalize when caring for a loved one with such a diagnosis. Diane balances it by being a strong advocate when it comes to medical care and financial support. She also keeps track of what's being felt physically, so they can best manage the diagnosis. Diane also ensured her daughter has the experiences she wants. From gem art to puzzles to watching a local soccer team, or an upcoming Disney Cruise, Diane makes sure she can live the life she wants.



2025 New Hampshire DSP of the Year

Nina Raymond

Aspire Living & Learning / Concord, NH

Nina's patient, positive and encouraging approach has led to her supports helping people overcome difficult or frustrating experiences. In one instance, a behavioral issue at a local YMCA led to a refusal to re-engage. Instead of forcing it or cutting out the activity, Nina knew it would be best to help them work their way back through light touches. First, they went to just observe, removing the pressure to interact or engage. In the meantime, she found ways to help them find alternative activities, which led to the weekly walking club. Now, not only have they eased back into the YMCA to participate in swimming classes, but the walking club remains a hit!

Additionally, Nina also participates in a DSP Mentorship program, helping to support and guide new hires to elevate the quality of supports from the ground up.





CONGRATULATIONS, 2025 DSPs OF THE YEAR!

In a community built around a commitment to person-centered support, DSPs are the heart and soul. Nina, your unwavering compassion and dedication are essential in guiding those we serve toward their personal goals, helping them seize new opportunities, and empowering them to live independently.

Thank you for your extraordinary commitment and for creating remarkable impact every day.



2025 New Jersey DSP of the Year

Fatmata Bayoh

Dungarvin / Somerset, NJ

Fatmata is a staunch advocate of the active participation of individuals in their own care plans, ensuring they are the primary voice so that each plan is personalized with their unique objectives. This means communication is key. Fatmata devises communication strategies—whether visual aids or communication devices—to remove any barriers to self-advocacy. She also knows the importance of socialization and family connection. In two instances, she helped an individual reconnect with friends and family by finding solutions to mobility challenges. Now they arrange for transportation and participate in social events with the people they care about. In another instance, Fatmata served as a mediator of sorts between an individual who experienced strained relationships with some members of their family. She offered support to both parties and facilitated the restoration of trust that has allowed them to remain in regular contact, which was a goal of the person she was supporting.



2025 New Mexico DSP of the Year Elaine Bahe

Dungarvin / Twin Lakes, NM

Elaine is a longtime advocate who has always understood the need for equal treatment for community inclusion, equal treatment, and personcentered supports. Having started her career over 22 vears ago, she's continued to push for what's right. Early in her career she stood up to negative attitudes within the community about the inclusion of the people she supported. The mother of an individual Elaine has supported stopped being able to physically make the long trip as they'd done before. Elaine knew how important the connection was, and came up with the idea to meet halfway, and find experiences they could share in the community, which has enhanced their relationship. In another scenario, Elaine used her creative thinking to find an outlet for disruptive behavior. Turns out making jewelry was calming and something they enjoyed. Elaine encouraged them to pursue this passion, and how they have a successful store operating through a Facebook page, in which they sell beaded jewelry, earrings and necklaces.



2025 New York DSP of the Year

Kelly Brewington

Living Resources / Albany, NY

Kelly has been a DSP for 35 years and knows the importance of person-centered supports. Kelly's ability to listen and adapt to each person's needs is the essence of exemplary person-centered care. Whether it's by creating strong emotional bonds, empowering independence, or celebrating individual milestones, Kelly consistently tailors her support to ensure that each individual thrives according to their goals and potential. She does this by encouraging independence and supporting people to reach small milestones that add up to a more fulfilled life.

Along the way, she celebrates each milestone, no matter the size. It's all part of the bigger picture to help the people she supports achieve life and goals they may not have considered attainable. Kelly's years of experience also make her a leader, where she serves as a mentor and advocate for fellow DSPs, elevating the standard of supports, and positively impacting everyone around her.



2025 North Carolina DSP of the Year

Earlean Rivers

Dungarvin / Warsaw, NC

Earlean approaches support by ensuring that individuals understand their rights and empowers them to be self-advocates through encouragement and helping them learn how to express their needs. An individual she supported struggled with managing their diabetes. Earlean found and helped them enroll in a course aimed at helping people manage the diagnosis. She helped adapt the curriculum so it could have maximum impact. Though she didn't stop there. With that knowledge, Earlean helped them find a healthy cooking class, discover how to shop for ingredients, and keep track of food intake.

Earlean also facilitates opportunities for the people she supports to volunteer in the community. Not only does it open up new hobbies, interests and passions, but individuals also feel empowered through seeing their ability to contribute to and enhance their community. Nothing makes Earlean prouder than supporting individuals to pursue their goals and dreams, and seeing those dreams realized, and goals accomplished.



2025 North Dakota DSP of the Year NIKKI Gray Sevita / Minot, ND

Nikki's consistent presence, advocacy, and commitment to fostering autonomy, friendships, and community engagement transform lives with empathy and excellence. Nikki goes above and beyond to ensure that the women she works with have consistent support for meaningful events like Special Olympics tournaments, Days at the Lake, and community softball games.

Nikki plays an active role in fostering strong community relationships. She ensures that communication remains clear between various programs and organizations, so each person can participate fully and seamlessly. Her dedication allows the women she supports to engage confidently in social activities, enhancing their social skills and expanding their network of friends and community supporters!



2025 Ohio DSP of the Year

Osman Conteh

BrightSpring Health Services / Cincinnati, OH

Osman works with individuals with high medical needs, but he doesn't allow that to stop them from doing whatever they want to do. In one instance, individuals Osman supported wanted to go to prom, and he made sure it happened. He took each on individual shopping trips for formal attire so they could look and feel their best and most confident. He made sure they had fresh haircuts, and facial hair trimmed or shaved. He also arranged for a nurse to be nearby so they could focus on having a good time without concerns. In the end they had a great time dancing, eating and socializing. That also wasn't a one-time occurrence. Osman routinely communicates with the people he supports to hear their interests, wants and desires. Whether it's arranging a swallow study so an individual can enjoy meals by mouth again, or attending sporting events, restaurants, tending to raised gardens he custom built, or decorating their home, Osman does all he can to facilitate the people he supports achieving the goals they want, and living the lives they envision for themselves.



2025 Oklahoma DSP of the Year

Nikkita Lightsey

Dungarvin / Norman, OK

Nikkita is all about building and maintaining relationships and doesn't let prior behavioral challenges get in the way. There have been multiple instances of Nikkita taking the time, and approach, necessary to ensure a quality relationship can blossom on the other side. After one individual's family said they couldn't handle them at family functions, Nikkita got permission from the family to practice being in large familial settings with her own family's gettogethers. The next step was to meet for dinner with one or two members of their family. Now they're regularly invited to Thanksgiving dinners and looks forward to them, and better yet, they do so independently.

In another instance, Nikkita helped resolve an interpersonal conflict that arose between two people in a group home. Nikkita figured that there had to be common ground they could find and did what was unthinkable to other staff: she took both people out at the same time. She set very strict ground rules just in case, but by eating together, going bowling or going for walks in the mall together, they resolved their differences and became good friends!



2025 Oregon DSP of the Year

Maria Francisco

Dungarvin / Portland, OR

Great leaders know that it's not about taking center stage or barking orders, it's about empowering those around you. Maria applies this to her supports. When a person she supported was struggling in college classes, rather than negotiating with the institution's resource center herself, she worked with them to advocate on their behalf. By encouraging them to identify their specific needs and find the supports that would help, they were able to get the help they needed to improve in the classroom.

Another person she supports is living through struggles with dementia, but Maria takes the same approach. She encourages them to be involved in their health care and engage in the rehabilitation and PT exercises that can improve their quality of life. Without Maria's encouragement, their condition would have gotten worse, preventing them from enjoying unique experiences and making new memories.



2025 Pennsylvania DSP of the Year

Taniyah Nelson

Sunrise Community / Philadelphia, PA

Taniyah consistently demonstrates a personcentered approach in her work, focusing on the individual needs, preferences, and goals of the people she supports. An example is how she worked with an individual who struggled with social anxiety and rarely left their home. Instead of pushing them into activities, Taniyah took time to understand their fears. With this understanding she gradually introduced lowtrigger community outings at their pace. By incorporating their interests and allowing them to set their own goals without fear of letting anyone down or being seen as a disappointment, they gained the confidence to eventually participate in a local art class – an activity they'd long desired but never felt capable of doing. From helping in situations like this to her leadership among colleagues, Taniyah knows that everything is based on trust, and that how trust is earned is different for every person.





CONGRATULATIONS

TO OUR 2025 DSPS OF THE YEAR!

At Sunrise Community, our Direct Support Professionals are the heart of what we do. Champions of independence, growth, and possibility.

Taniyah & Britany, your dedication and compassion empower the persons we support to live more fully and independently. Thanks to you, amazing things happen every day!

We celebrate you and the incredible difference you make.

LEARN MORE: WWW.SUNRISEGROUP.ORG



TANIYAH NELSONPennsylvania



BRITANY JACKSON

Florida



Congratulations AICIA PLANTE

The West Bay RI community extends our deepest gratitude to Alicia Plante. Your dedication, creativity, and unwavering commitment to people you support inspire us all. You embody the values of integrity, respect, and dedication and we are truly grateful for all that you do.



2025 Rhode Island DSP of the Year Alicia Plante

West Bay Rhode Island / Warwick, RI

Alicia's approach to person-centered support shines through in her commitment to aligning each person's interests with meaningful community involvement. When a gentleman expressed an interest in volunteering with animals, Alicia worked alongside him to find the right setting, trying several shelters until he felt most comfortable at the Exeter Animal Shelter. Two years later, he has become a valued volunteer whose presence is eagerly anticipated by the staff working there.

Alicia's dedication did not stop there; while at the shelter, she noticed vacant garden plots and saw an opportunity to enhance community engagement. Alongside people supported who are garden enthusiasts, Alicia organized the creation of a community garden. Through her efforts, she secured plant donations, with many community members bringing plants of their own. The event was a resounding success, drawing in community members outside of the provider agency who continue to maintain and enjoy the garden alongside people supported.



2025 South Dakota DSP of the Year

Rhonda Fuhrer

Vista Care / Belle Fourche, SD

Rhonda knows the importance of maintaining family connections, at home and int he community. She's helped the person she supports attend their uncle's 99th birthday, local homecoming parades, and their brother's rodeo events throughout South Dakota. Her attentiveness doesn't stop there. A person she supports has a variety of medical needs, and Rhonda makes sure they're able to advocate for themselves in any setting, whether with her or in a doctor's office. To help manage chronic pain, Rhonda also set them up with weekly massages. She also gives them confidence that their pain or condition shouldn't be a factor in doing things they want to do. They start there, then work on finding the most useful adaptive technologies to help them access the full enjoyment of activities they love doing and want to experience.





CONGRATULATIONS RHONDA!

Vista Care is thrilled to have Rhonda represent the incredible Shared Living Providers who offer dedicated, compassionate support to the individuals we serve. Her unwavering commitment exemplifies our mission of serving more people, better.

SERVING MORE PEOPLE BETTER

Vista Care Shared Living Providers keep the people we support in our hearts and actions at all times; we live purpose-filled days because purpose isn't just a word. It's the heart of everything we do.



2025 Tennessee DSP of the Year

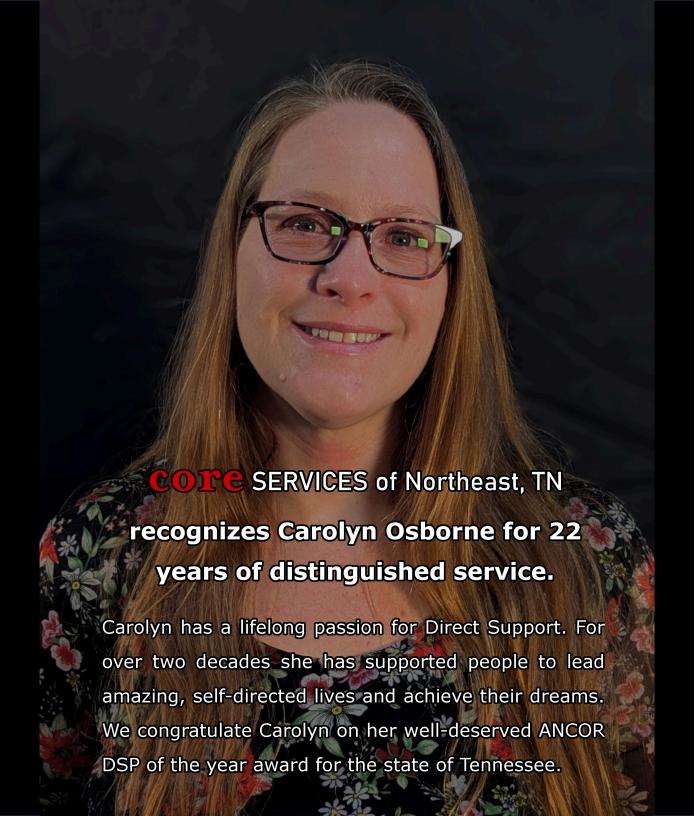
Carolyn Osborne

Core Services of Northeast Tennessee / Johnson City, TN

Carolyn has been a DSP for 17 years. She is hardworking, trustworthy and dependable, and she knows every one of the 46 people supported by her agency. For the past three years, Carolyn has served on a statewide DSP Workforce group. Alongside DSPs from across the state, Carolyn has tackled the difficult issue of recruiting, retaining, and fairly compensating Tennessee's DSPs. She was so well respected by her peers in the work group that she was chosen to present the workgroup's recommendations and findings to the Commissioner of the Department of Disability and Aging.

Later in the year, when the First Lady of the state visited the provider agency Carolyn gave a passionate speech on the need for support of a federal classification and compensation for Direct Support Professionals. Most recently Carolyn has enrolled in the NADSP e-Badge Academy, and she has participated in her agency's enabling technology program and holds national credentials through SHIFT.





Jennifer Wells

BrightSpring Health Services / San Antonio, TX

When you ask Jennifer what the foundation of her DSP work is built on, she will tell you, "It's about giving each client a piece of the world, no matter what they can or can't do. They deserve to feel the sun, to feel the breeze from a swing ride." Jennifer meticulously built a strong relationship with a person who had multiple unsuccessful attempts to be placed within other operations. It went from days of not being able to leave the home to spending hours on the patio in the sunshine, visiting the duck park, and visits to the rec center.

With Jennifer's unrelenting support, this individual was able to grow into doing what she truly loved – interacting with people. She goes to the movies, visits the circus, and goes holiday shopping with her family. She does it all with Jennifer's support. In fact, this individual has been able to go on extended trips with her family without additional supervision!



2025 Utah DSP of the Year Scott Sims

Chrysalis / Cedar City, UT

Scott has enhanced the lives and independence of many individuals over the more than six years he's worked with his organization. Scott has been instrumental in training many DSPs, so much so that many staff who were struggling when they were first hired are now some of our best staff due to his training abilities.

Scott keeps a calm approach in all situations which makes him a great Emergency Support Team Manager. Scott assists other staff who are struggling to support individuals in their crisis moments. Scott shows up at the homes, sometimes in the middle of the night, in poor weather, on holidays, and on weekends. He can always de-escalate situations and helps people remain calm while supporting the staff on shift as well. Scott is a great leader to his peers and one of the biggest supporters of the people he supports.



CONGRATULATIONS JILLIAN EARLE

ANCOR'S 2025 VERMONT DSP OF THE YEAR!

Community Care Network is pleased to celebrate the amazing work of Jillian Earle, Direct Support Professional, and her selection as Vermont DSP of the Year. From all of us here at Community Care Network, congratulations Jillian, we are so proud of you!



Jillian Earle

"Jillian's dedication as a Direct Support Professional has been truly transformative for the individuals she works with. Through her guidance and unwavering commitment, she helps prepare individuals for meaningful employment, equipping them with the skills and confidence needed to succeed. This recognition is a testament to her impact—not only on those she supports but also on the greater mission of fostering inclusive workplaces. I am incredibly proud of her achievements and grateful for her contributions to the Employment Department, Project SEARCH, and the individuals we serve."

- Kathi Austin, Employment Supports Manager, Community Care Network





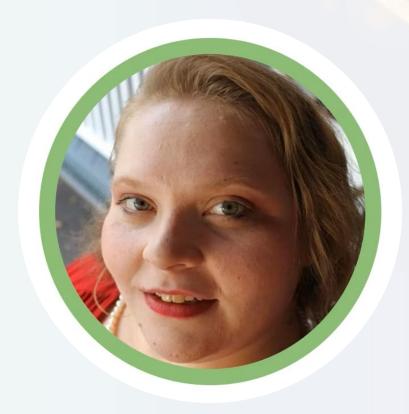


Jilian Earle

Rutland Mental Health Services / Rutland, VT

Jillian has been a dedicated DSP for over 3.5 years, exemplifying commitment, creativity, and compassion. Jillian consistently demonstrates exemplary leadership through her initiative and willingness to take on responsibilities beyond her role as a Job Coach. Recently, she spearheaded the development of recruitment brochures for the program, showcasing the unique opportunities available to potential interns. Jillian not only enhanced the program's visibility but also attracted individuals who could greatly benefit from its offerings.

Jillian's leadership is characterized by her ability to see the bigger picture. She actively seeks feedback from both interns and colleagues, incorporating their insights into her initiatives. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of ownership among team members and encourages a culture of continuous improvement.



2025 Virginia DSP of the Year Patrick Moriba

St. John's Community Services / Annandale, VA

For one person he supports who is socially isolated, Patrick regularly organizes small group outings tailored to their interests, such as local gardening and art clubs. By encouraging each person's participation and gently facilitating introductions, Patrick helps them feel comfortable, fostering friendships that have significantly reduced their feelings of isolation. For another person he supports who experiences challenges with communication, Patrick designed personalized social interaction activities, working on conversation skills and roleplaying common social scenarios. Over time, this person has become more confident in interacting with peers, and Patrick continues to support these new relationships.

By fostering both friendships and family bonds, Patrick goes above and beyond in relationship support, empowering each person to build lasting connections and providing them with lifelong social skills.

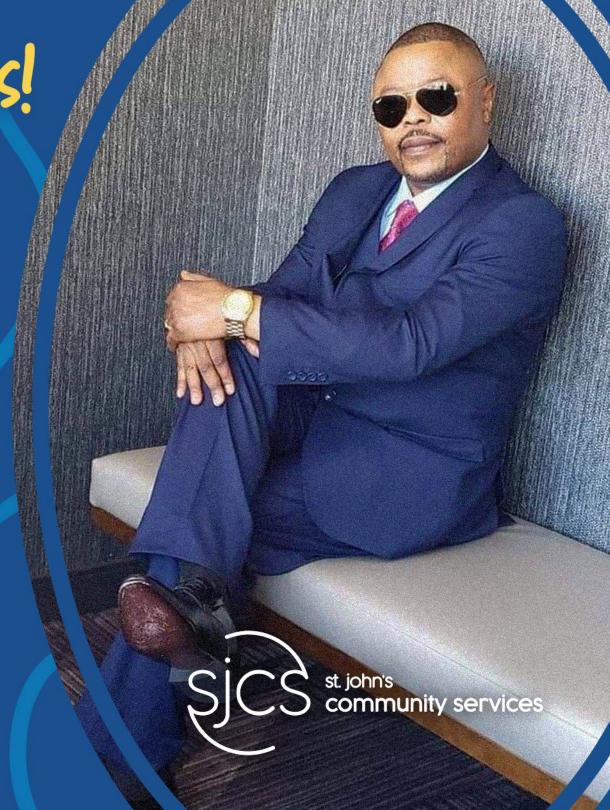


Congratulations!

Patrick's journey with SJCS has been remarkable, spanning nearly 8 years of dedicated service to individuals living with disabilities within our Virginia programs. His unwavering commitment and exceptional contributions have not gone unnoticed, culminating in a well-deserved national recognition by ANCOR at their upcoming National Conference in April.

Patrick's career at SJCS began as a Direct Support Professional (DSP), where he quickly established himself as a compassionate and skilled caregiver. Currently serving as a Lead DSP, Patrick continues to make significant impacts on the lives of those he supports.

We at SJCS are immensely proud of Patrick's accomplishments and honored to have him represent our organization on a national stage. This prestigious ANCOR award is a testament to his outstanding professionalism, unwavering compassion, and tireless advocacy. Thank you Patrick for your dedication to the people you support and all around being an amazing human!



2025 Washington DSP of the Year

Craig Sewald

Northwest Center / Renton, WA

Craig came to his organization with an impressive work history of consulting and project management. He understood that pivoting to a new DSP role would include further training and learning, and he sought out a course to equip himself to be the best DSP he could be. By completing this 40-hour course in customized employment, Craig was not only better able to serve his clients in reaching their employment goals—he now regularly trains new Employment Consultants who are new to job development!

Once someone he supports becomes employed, Craig strives to thoroughly immerse that client in their workplace environment. He ensures that there are sufficient natural supports and productive communication lines to create the most inclusive workplace possible.



2025 West Virginia DSP of the Year

Shirley Ross

BrightSpring Health Services / Martinsburg, WV

Shirley has served for three decades and believes in knowing clients individually to help build their lives. She is a shining example of the difference advocacy, dedication, and consistency can bring to another's life. Shirley began her service in the field shortly after deinstitutionalization was complete in the state, and community-based programs emerged. For nearly 30 years, Shirley has dedicated her life to serving those she supports. Throughout the years, Shirley has taken new workers under her wing, teaching the basics of the role and infusing her wisdom and experience into her mentorship. Shirley's gentle approach and steadfast belief in the importance of the services she provides has been the foundation for a multitude of employees over her 30 years of service and will no doubt continue to be a driving force as they become the new leaders of tomorrow.







Congratulations to Our 2025 Award-Winning Staff!

Thank you for helping people live their best life every day!



Andrea Smith Illinois DSP of the Year



Cheri Breland Louisiana DSP of the Year



Amari Bates Michigan DSP of the Year



Osman Conteh Ohio DSP of the Year



Jennifer Wells Texas DSP of the Year



Shirley Ross West Virginia DSP of the Year

2025 Wisconsin DSP of the Year

Wesley Willcutt

Sevita / Chippewa Falls, WI

After transitioning to direct care from his background in construction, Wesley has been a dedicated Direct Support Professional since 2013. It soon became clear that this former construction worker was meant for caregiving. When his organization was presented with an opportunity to have a float in a local parade, Wesley was the first to ask to support people served by being featured in the parade. This small community that once held town board meetings and picketed against the introduction of adult family homes is now clapping for people served as they throw candy out of a float.

By supporting people served daily to interact with their neighbors and community members, and building relationships with them, Wesley has not only helped people meet their community integration goals; he has helped to show people that they have a right to community access, even though it may not have seemed like it not that long ago.



2025 Wyoming DSP of the Year Lindsey Couch

Sevita / Casper, WY

In her short time in the field, Lindsey has exhibited remarkable growth, quickly establishing herself as a compassionate, quick learner, and natural leader. Lindsey exemplifies true teamwork and leadership. She took the initiative to hold one-on-one meetings with her peers, gathering input and ensuring everyone's voice was heard in fostering an inclusive environment for those they support. As a team player, Lindsey goes beyond expectations, frequently covering additional shifts, helping to train new team members, and offering guidance wherever needed. Lindsey consistently demonstrates creativity in her approach to challenges. For instance, when supporting an individual with increasing dementia symptoms, she incorporated memory games into the daily routine, making ADLs (Activities of Daily Living) enjoyable and attainable. This innovative approach not only helped the individual achieve their goals but also fostered a sense of independence and accomplishment.



AICOR