

Lynda DiPressi Selected As National DSP Of The Year!

ANCOR, an association of over 800 organizations serving people with disabilities, selected New Horizons' Lynda DiPressi, DSP-C, of Pleasant Valley, NY, as their 2012 National DSP of the Year. Having earned a DSP credential through a two-year training program offered by the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP), Lynda works at New Horizons Resources, Inc.'s Gerry Road Group Home in the Town of Poughkeepsie.

A DSP-C is a certified direct support professional who has undergone a rigorous program and demonstrated skills and knowledge that enable him or her to practice high quality direct support and is credentialed. She received the award at a ceremony to honor Direct Support Professional Recognition Award recipients at ANCOR's 2012 Conference: *Leading Cultures of Innovation and Advocacy* in Washington, DC.

The ANCOR selection committee for this award appreciated the skills documented in her portfolio highlighting the following criteria of the award: Achievements, Relationships, Advocacy, Sacrifices, Creativity, and Leadership. Lynda also serves on NYS/OPWDD Commissioner's Taskforce on System-wide Organizational Culture Change. Joseph Macbeth, executive director of NADSP, in his support of Lynda wrote: "I serve on a statewide committee with Lynda....It is refreshing to finally see a direct support professional take a leading role...becoming a change agent for our values...."

Congratulations Lynda!



A Message From the Executive Director....

Balancing Justice with Sundram's First Pillar

by Regis Obijiski

Punishing the bad guys—that small number of miscreants worming their way in human service—has always had an appeal. It's too bad that punishment alone will not solve our quality problems.

Along with hundreds of other organizations and individuals, New Horizons supportively signed on to Governor Cuomo's latest legislative proposal—the creation of The Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs. We are also looking to sign on to a State-wide mandate for capacity-building for the hundreds of thousands of direct support personnel in organizations licensed by State Agencies to provide important life-essential services.

The Justice Center, as it is known, is a well-muscled response to two years of headline grabbing misbehavior in the service system that supports people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. *The New York Times*, *The Poughkeepsie Journal* and many other newspapers shredded New York State for its weak oversight of and inept action on abusive and

neglectful treatment of our State's most vulnerable citizens occurring over the past ten years.

The Justice Center is a robustly punitive response to a public problem existing at the fringe of every good organization that provides services and care for our vulnerable sisters and brothers. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the proposed legislation that seeks to obviate the aberrant behavior from occurring in the first place, other than the fear of punishment. Lowering the hammer on bad behavior, the Justice Center proposal will increase criminal penalties by elevating the class of felonies and raising the top sentencing to fifteen years. As tough as this legislation will understandably be, there is a minority who say, incredulously, that the measures do not go far enough. The leadership figures in both the State Senate and State Assembly have publicly supported the legislation's passage.

Some of the other important responsibilities of the Justice Center are: absorbing nearly all the responsibilities of the NYS Commission of Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (CQCAPD); crafting common definitions of and



The NHR Newsletter is a quarterly publication produced by the agency to keep our friends informed about NHR's current activities.

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standards relating to abuse for all State Agencies; developing a code of ethical conduct; consolidating background check procedures; establishing, maintaining and publishing provider agency performance records; enforcing oversight by boards of directors; creating and maintaining a registry of incidents with trend analyses and corrective actions; setting up a 24/7 hotline staffed by trained professionals to ensure that allegations of abuse are promptly reported to law enforcement as necessary and investigated comprehensively; retaining a register of workers who have committed serious acts of abuse and ensuring that they will be prohibited from being re-hired anywhere in the State's human service system.

New York needs this law, but our State requires and deserves much more. Besides a code of ethics (the NADSP Code of Ethics is a good model), the human service system desperately needs a thoughtful and demanding list of competencies based on (inter) nationally validated skill standards, a voluntary and properly remunerated credential, similar to the certified credential advanced by NADSP. Those who cut hair and those who inspect our cars are required to be licensed in our State. Direct support personnel who provide life-enhancing services for the most vulnerable of New Yorkers are required to earn no such credential and are virtually absent from the NYS Department of Labor's list of trades and professions.

Governor Cuomo made a brilliant decision to appoint Clarence Sundram to the post of Governor's Special Advisor on Vulnerable Persons. Thanks to the balanced work of Mr. Sundram over the past year or so, our State's decision makers learned that we have a service system that "Jack" built—having expanded in haphazard fashion. Each State Agency has its own standards of conduct, its own mandated training, its own definitions of abuse, its own response to infractions, its own investigatory methods, its own criteria for reporting crimes to law enforcement, and so on.

In his study, *"The Measure of a Society: Protection of Vulnerable Persons in Residential Facilities Against Abuse & Neglect,"* Mr. Sundram examined data among six State Agencies: OPWDD (Office of Persons With Developmental Disabilities), OMH (Office of Mental Health), OCFS (Office of Children and Family Services), OASAS (Office of Substance and Alcohol Abuse), SED (State Education

Department), and DOH (Department of Health). One poignant example of systemic disparities is the 2010 data on reported allegations of abuse and neglect. OPWDD reported 8,550 incidents in community and institutional programs; OMH reported only 1,202 such incidents. SED's key standards on incident reporting of abuse and neglect are practically non-existent in law or regulation, and OCFS youth and adult family homes share that same distinction. The clear deduction from the data is not that OPWDD is an evil empire, but that the New York State definitions of and responses to abuse require re-balancing and systematizing.

Mr. Sundram advanced four pillars to support effective safety of people in the service system: 1) a strong well-trained and committed direct support staff; 2) clear and intelligible standards of expected conduct; 3) simple and reliable incident reporting systems; 4) effective implementation of preventive, corrective, and disciplinary action.

It is Mr. **Sundram's first pillar**—a strong, well-trained and committed direct support staff—that will not only balance the legally retributive measures of the Justice Center but also will do more good to protect people and prevent abuse. The Governor and Legislators must complete their work to protect vulnerable New Yorkers by adding balance to the Justice Center. They can shape a legacy that will be a superb "measure of a society" by examining the preparation of direct support personnel, their working conditions (hours, stressors, compensation), their un-credentialed profession, the absence of career ladder opportunities within direct support, and their central role in the success and safety of those for whom they provides service. We urge the State's decision-makers to adopt the whole report submitted by Clarence Sundram.

TAI CHI! *By Heidi Quinn*

I took David for my first time to his Tai Chi class. I was amazed with how focused he was for the full hour and how well he listened to Master Scott and followed direction. I am so happy he is participating in something he truly loves.



AROUND THE AGENCY NEWS

A Trip to the Baseball Hall of Fame by Edwina Marshall

On April 4, Travis Luria, Mike Toth, and I traveled to Cooperstown, NY to visit the National Baseball Hall of Fame. This was a first visit for Cubs and Yankees fan, Travis, and a return visit for Yankees fan, Mike and Blue Jays fan, me.

Highlights of the visit included an amazing movie about baseball's beginnings, and many hands on interactive activities. One of Travis' favorites was a booth where he had to try to answer a question about the rules of baseball by watching a video segment and choosing from multiple choices. The video would play again so you could check to see if you answered correctly. The questions were all based on rule changes from early baseball.



Travis (left) and Mike (right) outside the Baseball Hall of Fame

Travis also enjoyed seeing John Fogerty's guitar made out of a baseball bat that he used to play his 1985 hit song, "Centerfield", for the 25th anniversary of the museum in 2010. We learned that, contrary to popular belief, Babe Ruth was NOT an orphan! New to the Hall of Fame is a wing recognizing the Latin contribution to baseball. Everyone was amazed to walk down the hall of the "Hall of Fame" and stand before the statues of Babe Ruth and Ted Williams.

And what trip to a museum wouldn't be complete without a spin around the gift shop? The only regret the three of us had was that we didn't have another hour to spend in the museum!



A Real Job, Thanks To Judy!

Two New Horizons employees, Quincy Ferguson and Matthew Rowlette, were two of the featured speakers at a retirement dinner on April 26th honoring a New York State employee, Judy Wirges. Quincy and Matt, besides working at New Horizons, receive supports and services from our agency. Judy was the person who set up internships for Quincy and Matt.

Until the tag-team presentation of Quincy and Matt, the retirement dinner was enjoyable but typical in every way. At the podium, they thanked Judy for introducing them to a competitive working environment where they had to prove themselves. "Thank you, Judy, for giving us a chance and for believing in us...we are successful because you pushed us in the right direction...we are proving ourselves every day...to this day, I use my picture book to guide my work day and remind me to complete my tasks...if you ever wonder if you were success in what you did, think of us...we are your success story."

The two celebrated speakers received a standing ovation from all the participants, hugs, pats on the back and smiles of genuine gratitude. Their remarks at the microphone were heartfelt, and the enormity of praise for their presence and their words gave both men a swelling pride that their life is on a good track. Subsequent to the retirement celebration, one of the event's organizers wrote: "Matt and Quincy, you were the best part of the whole evening because you are not only successes and great speakers but also you are flesh and blood reminders of the mission of our work."

In the car, on the way home, Matt said: "I'm not used to giving speeches so I didn't know how to control my emotions. I got choked up because I felt so strongly about what I was saying." Quincy responded: "Matt, I thought you were going to cry. Me too. It's OK to feel this way and let it out. We should do it and never hold back. I'm glad I had a couple of O'Doul's."

AROUND THE AGENCY NEWS

Congratulations to Virginia "Gina" Heiser (DSP at Clinton Corners) for being selected as NHR's Employee of the Month in May!

Gina's nomination said the following: "My name is Stephanie Brenner and my son, Michael, resides in an NHR home in Clinton Corners. With appreciation and gratitude to the NHR staff, I would like to nominate Virginia Heiser (Gina), for NHR's Employee of the Month!

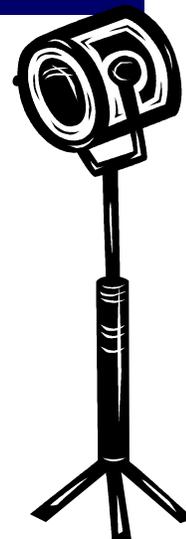
My son is the only Jewish person who resides in the Clinton Home and none of the employees there are of the Jewish faith. When my son lived at home for nearly 20 years, he always looked forward to our Shabbat (Shabbos) dinners on Friday nights. We lit our Shabbat candles, sang prayers, and had a special dinner - nothing super out of the ordinary, but it was festive with a table cloth, challah and chicken soup. Mike liked to tell a joke or 2, and even though it was the same jokes each week, my other children and husband and I would always laugh! Shabbat dinner was something we joyfully shared together as a family!

After he moved into the group home more than 4 years ago, Michael didn't seem to care about Shabbat. When I would visit, he would "state" the prayers, not chant; no jokes, no singing, and no joy... The staff did purchase 2 "holiday" type electric lights to symbolize the 2 Shabbat candles, but Michael showed no enthusiasm. I could not expect the staff to provide a festive Shabbat dinner when the rituals, prayers, songs, etc. were unfamiliar to them.

Over time, I became saddened by this. Gina was very supportive when I inquired if I could treat my son to a Shabbos dinner when I visited in January, and asked the NHR staff if some other Jewish residents from another home would want to be included. I am grateful to Jenn Wells, Fran Sitter, Heidi Quinn, and Gina for not only supporting this event but seeking other residents.

I was nervous about the dinner - not knowing if Mike would be welcoming of new people in his home, and if he'd enjoy the evening or if he'd want to hide in his room. However, I had nothing to fear. Michael was gleaming ear to ear and happily chanted the prayers, sang songs, and even told his usual Shabbat jokes! He never once tried to leave the dinner table to "escape"! The house smelled of chicken soup and Shabbat and it was a joy! 2 residents from another home, with a staff member, as well as one of my friends celebrated Shabbat with Mike and his housemates.

Spotlight On..



Virginia Heiser

After dinner Mike played the keyboard and everyone sang, danced, clapped and had fun. Gina was amazing - she cleaned all the pots and pans with a smile, and when she could, she clapped along.

We planned another dinner in March when I would be visiting next. She told me not to order food, that if I gave her suggestions she would cook herself! Due to unforeseen circumstances, I had to cancel my trip to NY. However, Gina did not cancel the Shabbat dinner! Gina cooked everything - including an attempt of gluten-free matzo ball soup!! She printed out all the prayers and she showed no signs of "stress."

Gina set the table nicely, used a pretty tablecloth, had the electric candles and ordered a gluten free "challah". I was totally amazed that she took on the responsibility of hosting this festive dinner by herself! She did all the preparation, facilitated the Shabbat "service" and she did the cleaning. Because of Gina's willingness to learn, taking the initiative, and overall support of continuing Mike's Jewish life, Michael experienced a sense of "home and family" - and this warms my heart - as I am sure it does my son's. She went above and beyond, out of her "comfort zone" and added joy to my son's life. If that doesn't warrant Employee of the Month, I don't know what does!!

AROUND THE AGENCY NEWS

Spring Special Olympics! *By Jenn Wells*



I would like to thank and congratulate the 35 athletes of the Horizon Suns track and field team that showed up to West Point on Saturday, May 12th for Spring Games and the family and staff that joined them. I am so proud of every athlete who came for following our two most important rules: 1. Do your best and 2. Have fun! Despite the threat of rain in the beginning the weather held out and everyone was able to compete and earn their ribbons and medals. If you work with or see an athlete of the Horizon Suns please congratulate him/her and ask to see the ribbons and medals!



An extra thank you and congratulations to my co-coach Lauren Hann who, in addition to spending countless hours training athletes and getting everything ready for the games with me, also designed a new team banner for the Horizon Suns. This year was the first ever banner contest at Spring Games and thanks to Lauren's creativity and many long hours of cutting and sewing I am proud to announce that the Horizon Suns won the banner contest! (Thank you to Jeni Rodriguez and Mary McNamara for helping us pull it out in the end!) The prize is \$150 of equipment for our training club!



Above from left to right: Lisa Munzer with Carol LaRose, Beth Pulst; Suman Miller, Quincy Ferguson, Aaron Abolafia and Andrew Kessler; Jeffrey Gamble.

Congratulations Horizon Suns! You make me proud!

AROUND THE AGENCY NEWS

Good Times at Clintondale *by Donna Newkirk*

29 Picnic Woods Road has had many wonderful things going on! Recently, we have started an indoor garden project and had 1 on 1 day-cations to the Basketball Hall of Fame, Woodstock, Pinegrove Dude Ranch, and the Palisades Mall! We are a busy bunch! If we aren't shooting hoops, having music, or bowling, you can find us on the rail trail or the walkway, or perhaps at the pool or the movies?!

Our families have also been wonderful! For Christmas, the families paid to cater a staff meeting, what a treat! We are very grateful to all the families and friends we have here at CDR! We had grandparents donate money in the house's name for the NHF golf tournament (thank you to the Minards) and an AWESOME bird house put up in the back yard. By bird house, I do not mean a little store bought one, I mean a condo for the Purple Martin. Mr. Peterson explained the complexities of this bird house and bird. The Purple Martin eats mosquitoes, thank goodness for that, and the house itself has 2 floors, and 16 "apartments"! There is even a bird porch!

Another exciting thing is that an individual was reunited with an old friend from 30 years ago and that relationship is going strong.

It would take up the whole newsletter to tell you about all of the wonderful things we have going on, but to sum it all up, we are continuously being blessed!




Congratulations to Sally Heilman (MSC Coordinator) and Jerilynne Smith (HR Coordinator) for making it to the finals in Literacy Connections' Annual Spelling Bee, which was held in March at Marist College. Regis Obijiski (Executive Director) was a pronouncer at the event.



Thank you to KeyBank for sponsoring our team!

The Annual Community Spelling Bee supports reading programs for adults and families throughout Dutchess County. They provide services to help people obtain a GED, become US Citizens, and to get better jobs. They are reading to their children, and helping them become better students. Success in literacy truly changes lives!

Congratulations to Julia Rountree-Henry, Residence Coordinator at Pleasant Valley, for celebrating her 10 year work anniversary!



Pictured from left to right: Kathy Lederman-Miller, Peri Hanley, Kieran Blauvelt, Julia Rountree-Henry, Jayne Violon, Cyrus Kirigi, and Ed Schebilski.



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Mission Statement:

The mission of New Horizons Resources, Inc. is to enable people with developmental disabilities to achieve fulfilling lives within their local communities by establishing a home, belonging, self-determination and respect.

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News from the Foundation Office Beth Cookinham, Foundation Director

SAVE THE DATES.....



**NHF 29th ANNUAL INVITATIONAL
GOLF TOURNAMENT**

MONDAY, JUNE 18th—NEW DATE!
Dutchess Golf & Country Club
1pm Shot Gun Tee Off

**VOLUNTEERS WANTED! GOLF SPACE
STILL AVAILABLE. FOR MORE INFOR-
MATION, CALL 473-3000 x322 OR
WWW.NHRNY.ORG**

Fall Events!

**9th Annual Fall Into Fashion
Show**

Thursday, October 4, 2012
Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel
New this year— 90 minute cocktail hour and runway
style seating!

**18th Annual
Community Leadership Breakfast**

Honoring:
John & Gloria Golden
Karen Hansen Simon
Kelly Traver, Esq.

Thursday, October 25, 2012
Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel

For more information, please visit our website