

We  our
DSPS!

EXPRESSING

Gratitude & Grace
to Our Agency's Direct
Support Professionals



ANCOR | RELIAS
**DIRECT SUPPORT
PROFESSIONAL
RECOGNITION WEEK**
SEPTEMBER 10-16, 2023



**Citizens Options
Unlimited**

**Our DSPs in Citizens
are truly the best!
They support people
to live the lives they
choose and promote
community inclusion
at every opportunity.**

**Thanks for your
support of the
mission and the
professional way you
provide supports.**

**CHRISTOPHER O'CONNOR,
C.O.O AT CITIZENS OPTIONS UNLIMITED**

This is about the journey I took to Massachusetts with my DSP. It was a long five-and-a-half-hour drive. But was worth it. On August 11, I was lucky enough to take a trip to Massachusetts to visit a couple of long-time friends that I went to program with from 15 years old until I was 19.

It's been 19 years since we were last together. The 19-year part was long overdue... We have seen each other over video chat, but it isn't the same.

I was very blessed to have the opportunity to go.

Thank you to Citizens Options Unlimited, for helping me arrange this trip and following through with making it happen, **and to my group home staff; that help me in life and to achieve all my goals, wants, and needs in life.** You are like family.

A special thanks to Karen Jones, Assistant Director of Residential Services; Glenda Gould, House Manager of Manor Road; Aishaamd, DSP; and all the other people who help me.

**MATT HOFELE,
PERSON SUPPORTED**



**MATT HOFELE WITH LONGTIME FRIENDS
IN MASSACHUSSETS**

Kathy Anderson is the best!!! Taking care of my dear Kevin for many years...Couldn't ask for a nicer, caring person.

Thanks for your support of the mission and the professional way you provide supports.

**CAROL JOHNSTON,
PARENT OF A PERSON SUPPORTED**

My son moved into Helen Kaplan in Plainview (House B) March 13th of this year. Prior to that, he was in a group home with another agency.

We found John a new home because his prior residence was not a good fit. Staff didn't pay attention to his health needs and he wound up in the ICU for 7 weeks, 4 weeks total on a ventilator.

When my case worker told me Citizens had a spot, I was so thrilled. **In the 4 months since John has been with Citizens, I have seen him thrive.** The managers, nurses, case worker and all of the staff have been amazing.

I know he is loved very much by all of them and I feel so blessed knowing he is safe and well taken care of.

Although the pay should be more for everyone (believe me, I've signed every petition), I believe that for most of them this is their passion.

DSPs are under-appreciated and I, for one, am grateful for the ones dealing every day with my son. They are God's special angels!

MARY REARDON, PARENT OF A PERSON SUPPORTED



**JOHN REARDON AT HIS NEW HOME
AT HELEN KAPLAN**

I love being a DSP because I get to accompany Annie to her activities as well as movies, shopping & the beach...**There aren't many jobs where you can do that!!**

Being able to help Annie in her community and continue the activities she loves & has been doing for years, such as her bowling, which she would have to stop without the support to get her there.

Seeing Annie continue to get stronger at the gym, from the start when she struggled with the exercises to today when she is lifting heavier weights & doing more reps... it's impressive.

I wish the public knew how fun it can be to be a DSP. I have been so lucky to meet so many amazing people from Annie's peers, other DSPs & those that organize the activities she attends while ensuring she can live her best life.

CLARE MCKEOWN,
COMMUNITY HABILITATION DSP FOR
SELF-DIRECTION



DSP CLARE MCKEOWN WITH ANNIE O'SHAUGNESSY

Words are never enough to say how appreciative we are to have Clare there for Annie.

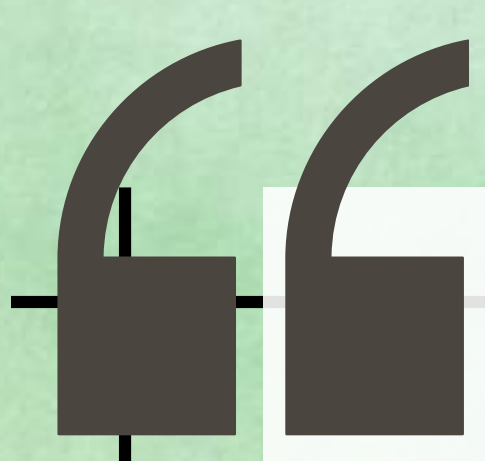
If you know Annie or as the world calls her “Annie O,” you can understand that she is a unique individual with a specific point of view. And Clare gets her.

Clare understands the balance and patience it takes to help Annie navigate her very busy days. Clare takes stress off of my shoulders when she helps to escort Annie to her activities or **steps up to get Annie up and out of her world of comfort into the world of being interactive.**

And Clare, to her you are her Clare Bear, and that is her way of saying “I Love You!”

Thank you.

KERRY O'SHAUGNESSY,
SIBLING OF A PERSON SUPPORTED



**Thanks to all
of our DSPs.
We would
not have any
day programs
to go to
without you!**

**NOAH PROBERT,
PERSON SUPPORTED**



Because of



I can do anything
I set out to do

Noah
Probert

YOU

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I wanted to thank all the ladies at the Seaford house. The staff work hard to make sure that my daughter's life is a good one. Words can't express my gratitude in doing one of the most challenging and rewarding jobs. It takes a special kind of person to do the work of providing a wonderful life to those who truly need help. They are angels here on earth.

**MARYANN DELLOVA,
PARENT OF A PERSON SUPPORTED**

“
Carita McCall
has been a
**positive
influence in
the house and
has given the
residents
extraordinary
care!**

SEAFORD HOUSE
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I first started working with our family of organizations in 2009 at the young age of 19. I started out working in the residential program at Ruby Ln. I loved being a DSP and working closely with those we supported. Especially when we got to do fun activities, such as seeing Wicked and The Lion King on Broadway, weekends up at Dude Ranch, etc. **Being a DSP, for me, was supposed to be something temporary, just a stepping stone** in life until I found what I really wanted to do.

But the more I worked with the people we support, the more I realized, I loved feeling like I was making a difference in someone else's life. This made me work harder to eventually move up the chain to Assistant Manager, first in Residential and then in Day Program, then Manager, first in Day Program and then back to Residential - but I still felt like I wanted to do more.

So, I decided to get my bachelor's degree in healthcare administration and graduated in the middle of the pandemic in 2020. And now here I am, Assistant Director for the Citizens Options Unlimited Residential program.

Throughout the 15 years I have always reminded myself of 2 things:

1. I love what I do, and I love the feeling I get knowing that I am making a difference in people's lives.
2. Without the hard work and dedication of our DSPs, the people we support may not be able to thrive and live as independently as possible.

This is why DSPs are important and deserve livable wages, because without them, without the **love, support, and dedication** that they show to the people we support every day, people with I/DD would not be able to thrive the way they do. Our DSP help them to be independent in every aspect of their lives, from shopping for and preparing meals, going to doctors' appointments and taking medications, to finances and ADL skills. Our DSP really are miracle workers and should be paid as such.

**JUSTIN DENIGRIS, RESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AT
CITIZENS OPTIONS UNLIMITED AND FORMER DSP**

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I have been working here for over 6 years and **just being around the people I support brings me the greatest joy.** My friend Vu here was always able to get me to smile and laugh no matter what. Vu was the biggest character for a young guy. He always had a smile on his face and his laugh was so infectious.

ALEXANDRIA “ALLIE” LAGALA,
RESIDENTIAL DSP, SHOREHAM ICF



DSP ALEXANDRIA LAGALA AND VU DANG

We have been a part of the agency for over 20 years and I have designated myself as the official “Broken Record of DSP Recognition Week!”

So, here goes: In my opinion, the ladies and gentlemen who work directly with the population have a calling similar to those who enter a religious life. This is more than a job. **The kindness, patience, and compassion** needed to effectively care for our loved ones comes from the heart, not from the desire to garner a huge paycheck.

Once again, thank you to the DSPs for all that you do!

SUSAN AND PATRICK BRODERICK,
PARENTS OF A PERSON SUPPORTED



AMANDA BROERICK WITH HER FAMILY AND DSPS

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Gertie is a wonderful staff for our residence. She is very caring, professional, respectful and she communicates very well with management, nursing, parents, and AD. **If Gertie is on vacation or out for any reason, her absence is felt.** She gets along very well with our individuals and the staff. On behalf of our individuals, we thank you for doing an amazing job. Keep up the good work!

PARENT OF A PERSON SUPPORTED

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Me and Elaine learn a lot from each other. When I first started five years ago, Elaine was bored at home and eager to begin exploring the world right away. We have so much fun together and are both lucky we got paired together.

**JON CLEMENS,
COMMUNITY HABILITATION DSP
FOR SELF-DIRECTION**



DSP JON CLEMENS AND ELAINE RAZUKAS

It's with great honor that I will like to show greatest appreciation to Mr. Melbourne Henry who works as my son's Comm Hab DSP. He is a treasured gift. **He is very reliable and dependable, loving and committed to our son.**

Mr. Henry's passion for his job shows in the way he cares about Jaiden. Just knowing that my child is comfortable and feels safe being with him gives me relief and comfort. Mr. Henry has worked with great patience on his goals. He wants nothing more than to see Jaiden excel.

I appreciate all that he does. We are happy to have him on our team.

DIERDRE LINTON
PARENT OF A PERSON SUPPORTED

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To the Direct
Support
Professionals of
The Lawrence
House:
**APPRECIATE
ALL YOU DO!!!!!!**

LINDA FITZPATRICK-MEGGS,
PARENT OF A PERSON SUPPORTED

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IB Ajiborisha is a long time faithful DSP at Red Spring Lane IRA and is a constant to all the persons served.

She is also a mother of young children and brings a lot of practical experience to the house.

She deserves our heartfelt thanks!

**BOB STAATS,
PARENT OF A PERSON SUPPORTED**

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Sharon Bird is a DSP assigned to the Red Spring Lane IRA who was part of the emergency response to a seizure my son Phillip had in a restaurant during a street fair in Glen Cove.

Her actions were integral in Phil's safety and care. She deserves recognition.

**BOB STAATS,
PARENT OF A PERSON SUPPORTED**

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**Keisha Mullings, a DSP at Red Spring Lane, was of tremendous help in sitting at Phillip’s bedside and keeping him occupied as to not remove his IV during a recent hospitalization at Glen Cove Hospital...
Sitting alongside Phil for an 8 hour shift.**

**BOB STAATS,
PARENT OF A PERSON SUPPORTED**

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Martine Jerome is a constant in Phil's life in the Red Spring Lane IRA. She was instrumental in Phil's bedside care while in the Glen Cove Hospital 2 weeks ago. He was at the end of his admission and beginning to get very impatient. He was determined to pull the IV out of his arm. She went above and beyond her normal duties and this effort is very much appreciated!

**BOB STAATS,
PARENT OF A PERSON SUPPORTED**

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Carolle Jean was a DSP working at Red Spring Lane and was instrumental in assisting Phillip who had a grand-mal seizure just after a dinner in a crowded restaurant during a street fair in Glen Cove. She knew exactly what to do to keep him from choking and aspirating his food. We are very grateful.

**BOB STAATS,
PARENT OF A PERSON SUPPORTED**

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**Shout out to all the
other amazing DSPs
at Red Spring Lane:
Trudy Siafwa,
Gregory Levielle,
Carolle Jean
Baptist, and Alisha
Sefu!**

**BOB STAATS,
PARENT OF A PERSON SUPPORTED**

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Being a CHDSP is an amazing gift! I've been working with my client for about 2 years now. Over the past 2 years, I have seen tremendous growth in overall independence and social skills. **They continue to make beautiful strides towards communicating with family members, peers, and other unfamiliar community members.** I am proud of the work we do and even prouder of the hard work they do each and every session!

MICHELLE SHAAKE,
COMMUNITY HABILITATION DSP FOR SELF-
DIRECTION

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I love my job, just had my 4 year anniversary. Thank God who gave me this job. God bless you all and **let's continue helping others in the name of Jesus**

**CESARINA RODRAGUEZ,
DSP**

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**I miss my
staff
Diamond
Guiraud every
day!**

VLADIMIR NOEL,
PERSON SUPPORTED

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