

## Commemorating the Legacy of Dr. King With a Day of Service



*Pictured from left to right:* Noah Probert and Councilwoman, Marsha Silverman; Jerri Walker, Volunteer Coordinator; Noah Probert, a featured speaker in the 40th Annual MLK Commission Commemorative Program.

Many people from Citizens participated in the 40th Annual MLK Commission March and Commemorative Program organized by the City of Glen Cove and Glen Cove City School District.

The program included remarks from City of Glen Cove officials, Mayor Pamela Panzenbeck and Councilwoman Marsha Silverman, as well as citations presented to community leaders, including CEO and Planning Commission Member, Stanford J. Perry.

We are very proud of Noah Probert, a strong advocate from Citizens who shared his personal life experience and the need for community embracement of all people. “Growing up with a disability, I had to face obstacles related to using a wheelchair. But I refused to let these obstacles define me,” said Noah, who finished his speech to a standing ovation. “Together, we can turn Dr. King’s dream into a reality and make every day an MLK Day.”

Special thanks to Jerri Walker, Volunteer Coordinator, who coordinated many activities this day including the inclusive volunteer project where agency and community volunteers through unite to provide food assistance to the Long Island community. The food was donated to local food pantry NOSH and would support over 60 families for three days struggling with food insecurity.



## Mission Statement & Management Plan Annual Review

Each year, Citizens reviews the agency’s Mission Statement and Compass Management Plan. It began with the Council and Compass committee reviews in the fall. Recommended changes were then be forwarded to the Board of Directors for their review in March of 2024 and approved.

### **Our Mission is clear and thriving!**

Citizens’ mission statement clearly defines our purpose, core function, and goals. In other words, it tells everyone who we are, what we do, why we do it — all in a just a few words.



## Citizens Options Unlimited

Supports people to live the life they choose.

### Vision Statement

A world where all people  
are valued.

## COMPASS MANAGEMENT PLAN ANNUAL REVIEW

### Summary of Changes

Council Recommendations: None currently.

COMPASS Committee Recommendations: See below.

#### **All Criterion:**

Update document to include person-first language. Person-first language emphasizes the person before the disability. For example, the “person who is blind” or “people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.”

#### **Criterion #1 - Board and Management Commitment:**

Continue: To assess and possibly add a second advocate as a board member.

#### **Criterion #2 - Mission Statement and Commitment to the ISE:**

Add: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

#### **Criterion #3 – Empowerment:**

Change: Family Seminars to “Inform Me” seminar series to reflect/signify inclusion of all stakeholders.

Add: Rights that are important to a person are solicited through the Individual Questionnaire.

Change: A POM Rally is held twice a year. This rally was previously held once a year.

#### **Criterion #5 – Self-Survey:**

Pending: Continue to assess possible changes to self-survey to include OPWDD Risk Stratified Survey Process.

#### **Criterion #6 – Valued Outcomes:**

Update: Workforce Development activity to include examples of current initiatives.

Continue: To assess and possibly revise Personal Outcome Measures Quality Reviews to strengthen support of each person’s desired personal outcomes.

#### **Criterion #7 – Quality Improvement:**

Pilot: Quarterly meetings are held to monitor, review and revise Agency quality improvement goals as needed

## Thomas Rosenthal Attends Sister's Wedding



For **Thomas Rosenthal**, attending his sister's wedding was an important milestone — and one the Shoreham ICF team partnered with his family to make the family complete!

With the help of his two preferred DSPs, Elijah Muhammad and Erik Trusch, (pictured left) Thomas was able to attend the majority of the reception, take photographs with family and friends, and enjoy dinner and dessert with his parents at the family table.

The devoted team includes Mary Gilleran, Director at Shoreham ICF; Posney Gilles, Assistant Director at Shoreham; Krysta Fabian, Behavior Intervention Specialist (BIS); Eileen Plumacher, Qualified Intellectual Disability Professional (QIDP); Sara Buckley, LPN; Stacey Forman, LPN; psychiatrist Dr. Magery Satish; and the many DSPs who work at Gardenview.

## A Mother's Love: How One



Yvon Novy transformed care for people with developmental disabilities, inspired and empowered by her son, David. And while David had his challenges, it was his joy for life and living that inspired her.

Yvon's advocacy created a specialized home for people like her son, while advocating to improve care standards. She educated healthcare workers on supporting people who do not use spoken language to communicate, seeking to improve how medical care is provided.

Following David's death from Covid-19 this past February, Yvon continues to support people with developmental disabilities, honoring her son's memory and her commitment to enhancing care for others.

## People First News via OPWDD

*'A Celebration of Excellence' was held for 30 DSPs as part of the NADSP E-Badge Academy. Congratulations to the 1,000th certified DSP, Tiajuana Gardner, and to all of the E-Badge Academy graduates who have completed this credentialing.*

OPWDD and The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) gathered to celebrate the 1,000th DSP to earn accreditation from the NADSP E-Badge Academy in New York State since the professional development program began in July 2023.

The E-Badge Academy offers Direct Support Professionals and Frontline Supervisors the ability to earn national certification through stackable electronic badges. These badges demonstrate the knowledge, skills and values that these professionals use every day to support people with developmental disabilities and provide national recognition for the contributions and competence of Direct Support Professionals who meet the certification standards. The program provides cash bonuses to the participants and reimburses employers for training hours for their participating DSPs. Joining the celebration was OPWDD Commissioner Kerri Neifeld of OPWDD, NADSP CEO and President Joe MacBeth, OPWDD Deputy Commissioner of Administration Adrienne Mazeau, OPWDD Associate Commissioner of Administration Alison Pingelski, Long Island DDRO Director Michelle Torres, NYS E-Badge Academy Administrator for NADSP Kathy Brown, CEO Stanford Perry, Citizens Options Unlimited Board President Hallie Klein, BCCS Board President Al Capra, AHRC Nassau Board President, Sandy Gumerove and other industry leaders.



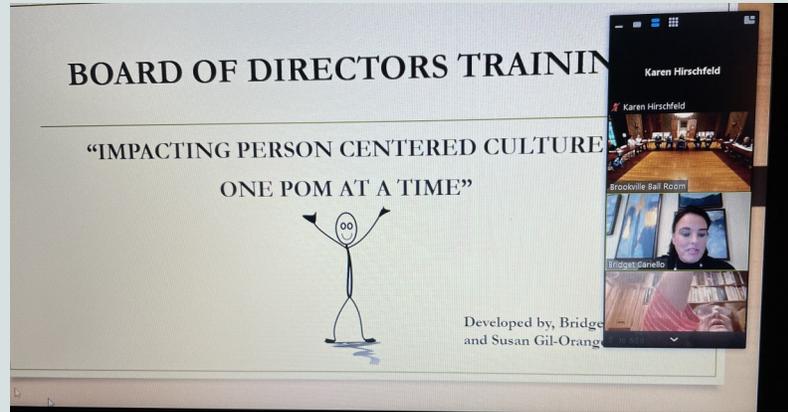
## Annual Board Compass Training



The annual Board Training was completed last Fall for Citizens Options Unlimited Board of Directors.

The 2023 Annual Compass training was provided on “Impacting Person Centered Culture One POM at a Time” by Bridget Cariello, Assistant

Director Strategic Project Development and Susan Gill Orange, CQL Certified Personal Outcome Trainer.



Thank you Susan and Bridget for the great information and supporting us all in maintaining and enhancing a Person-centered culture at Citizens!

## The Sibling Group Stays Connected

In 2023 and 2024, the Sibling Group remained connected mostly via Zoom meetings. Our annual Holiday party was held on December and a great time was had by all. We look forward to discussing the future of this group and how it can further evolve.



**2024 SIBLING GROUP**  
 Please join us!  
**Sibling Barbeque Save the Date: Brookville**  
**June 20th, 2024 at 6:00 pm**

**Sibling Group Meeting**  
**August 8th, 2024 IN PERSON Meeting**  
**Plainview, NY**

**Sibling Group Meetings are held in-person or virtually at 6pm.**  
**Please contact Colleen Tapia at [ctapia@ahrc.org](mailto:ctapia@ahrc.org)**



## Board Physical Plant Inspections by Colleen Tapia

The annual Physical Plant Inspection meeting was held on March 14, 2024. The inspections were noted to continue to be highly successful in ensuring a high level of quality is maintained.

The total number of completed inspections in 2023 increased significantly from 2022. This was due to the increase in ability to visit sites in 2023 versus during the COVID pandemic.

There were no changes to the Board Physical Plant Inspections process recommended. The hybrid approach of virtual and on-site inspections will remain in place as both types of inspections have been highly beneficial and effective.

This Compass initiative, whether conducted in-person or virtually, showcases a commitment to maintaining high standards across sites, emphasizing the importance of a safe, welcoming environment for all. Great job to everyone contributing to these successes.



Members of the Board of Directors and Citizens management staff at a prior annual Physical Plant Inspection meeting.



## CQL Personal Outcome Measures POM Spotlight – Celebrating Community Integration at Citizens on Red Spring Lane

By Samantha Rodonis

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak with Christine Basile, the manager of Red Spring Lane. I spoke to Christine when completing the follow up for a POM interview I had done with one the gentlemen she supported.

During his interview, I learned so much about the incredible opportunities for community integration that were created for the people supported living there.



Together, the residents work with Christine and staff to create experiences and ensure that people they support a part of their community by attending local events in their town throughout the years, so much so that the whole community knows who they are.

In 2023 they were even given a citation by the local government to celebrate their active participation in the Glen Cove community.

One of the sections covered in a POM interview is called “My Community.” In this area, POM interviewers ask about what you do in your community, who you know in your community as well as if you spend enough time participating in your community.

Red Spring Lane has fully embraced the need to be a part of their community. They attend concerts in the parks, holiday celebrations, support local businesses and utilize the local YMCA pool. Each person has the opportunity to be a part of the Glen Cove community, a community that welcomes them all with open arms.

During The POM Department’s celebratory event, called “Show Us Your POMs” we honored people we support and the staff who assist them in living their own best lives. During the winter of 2024, we had the opportunity to honor the staff at Red Spring Lane and all they do. They truly to exemplify the person-centered spirit by supporting people to make their own choices and engage in their community one person, one activity at a time.

### From the Desk of the Citizens Options Unlimited, CEO ,Stanford Perry

Dear Families and Friends,

As we enter March, we recognize Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. It’s a time to celebrate our community’s many accomplishments, but most importantly it’s a time to advocate.

Through April 1 and beyond, it’s imperative for everyone in our community to call out for sufficient state funding by using our one-click campaign. We must let legislators know the importance of increasing DSP wages (the Direct Support Wage Enhancement) and funding for sustainable operations (the 3.2% Cost of Living Adjustment) of disability service providers like Citizens. I also invite you to join our campaign

#InclusionStartsWithYou: please share images, video and stories of how people with IDD impact your life by tagging Citizens across social media.



At the program level, Citizens has been making meaningful strides through the continued development of staff and person-centered programs. Recently, Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and Frontline Supervisors were honored by New York State’s Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP). The agency also had a successful meeting with CQL | The Council on Quality and Leadership as part of maintaining an accreditation only held by nine agencies around the world.

Only by working together can we make the changes needed to create a more inclusive and equitable future for all. Thank you for being a part of our community and advancing our shared mission.

## Citizens Council by Tessa Guillaume-Lewis

- Rights Training is reviewed at every meeting and further explains what rights mean and consequences when we exercise our rights.
- Demonstrating staff appreciation was discussed and how best to show appreciation.
- Continued hybrid meeting concept for the people that feel safer and better on Zoom.
- Updating Citizens presence in Plainview with pictures and art.
- Increasing membership and participation campaign.
- Fundraiser ideas.
- Having meeting at different locations.
- Meeting attendance.
- The council board members' responsibilities.
- Change of day for council meeting - now Wednesday.

The Citizens Residential Council looks forward to accomplishing its goals of community inclusion and a more robust membership. The members have resumed meeting in person and for the people not able to, or ready to come back, we have kept the Zoom links going.

### *Citizens' Council Board!*

*President: Bonnie Lerhinan*

*Vice President: Devon Rivera*

*Secretary: Steven Barsh*

*Treasurer: Gabriele O'Brien*

*AD representative: Justin DeNigris*

*Citizens' Council representative: Matthew Hofele*

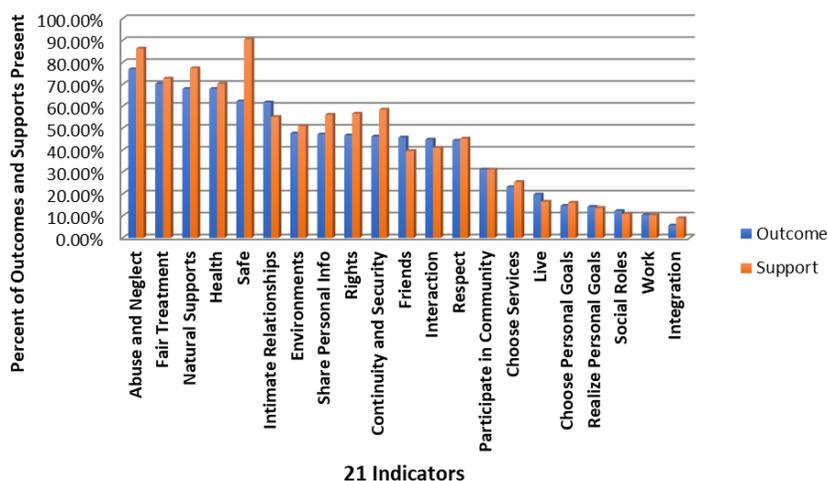
## Executive Council

- About 25 people attended to the SANYS state wide conference in Albany in October.
- In February, Jim Stock came to the council to speak about recruitment and staff retention.
- We hosted the annual rights rally where FREE Drum Core played and Brian Johnson and Devon Rivera won the advocate of the year.
- Stanford Perry came to our November 29<sup>th</sup> Council meeting.
- People attended the rally on November 15<sup>th</sup> that was in Albany to advocate for the COLA and Direct Support Wage Enhancement.
- A new enrollment orientation training was completed that review many systems including advocacy, chain of command and our grievance procedure.
- We started hosting a virtual advocacy leadership training course where people can attend to learn how to become a better advocate.
- A virtual financial decision-making training was held.
- We reviewed an advocacy booklet that discussed all different kinds of advocacy suggestions.
- Michelle Rudoff and Michael Costa advocated about the price increase of the soda machines and that nobody was notified.



## Personal Outcomes Measures Update By Bridget Cariello

**POM Interview Data:  
Total Percent of Outcomes and Supports Across  
Agency (2023)**



For 2023, 218 interviews were conducted. POMs are typically conducted every three years or as requested, with the exception that people with formal rights restrictions are interviewed annually. Therefore, while it is useful to compare data for 2022 with 2023 to reflect larger trends within the agency (as well as trends influenced by OPWDD), each year’s data represents a different group of people with different desires that can change over time.

In 2023, the POM Department create the “*Discovering You,*” series of workshops which focus on the concerns of students transitioning from the high school to the adult world. The Department also hosted their annual **POMs Rally**. Earlier in the year the POM department concentrated its efforts in ensuring that each person understands their right to choose services. A presentation entitled “**A Voice for Choice**” was developed to provide people with information on their day options. In

addition, for the first time, the POM Department provided a workshop that incorporated the cultural expectations inherent in our organization along with an explanation of what the personal outcome process for **Camp Loyaltown** personnel. New in 2023 was also the CQL POM interviewer co-certification of a staff member and a person supported. This initiative is designed to enlarge the capabilities of people supported, giving them a more substantive role in the agency structure. **Looking ahead in 2024:** POMS Empowering You Classes, “Show Us Your POMs,” Personal Discovery Event to increase people awareness of choice and the personal planning process, Life Model Meeting, and more of “Discovering You.” All of these initiatives will take place i to expand everyone’s knowledge and exposure to the vital importance of the CQL’s 21 Personal Outcome Measures. Together we will continue supporting people to live their own best lives, their own way!

### A Shining Star

By Michelle Rudoff

Gloria has been part of the Virtual Connections program since it first started in March/April of 2020 due to the pandemic.

Gloria has had so much growth over the past three and a half years of attending Virtual Connections. From having her mom, Mrs. Campbell, sitting with her and having to repeat after her to Mrs. Campbell just logging and Gloria on Gloria answering the host, or her friends’ questions, on her own.

While voting for the Co-host for the Virtual Connections holiday concert, Michelle suggested to give Gloria a chance with guidance from the host and her friends.

Gloria can do it! During one of the practices Michelle asked Gloria to introduce her friend Sohum, and Gloria said, “This is Sohum.” :)



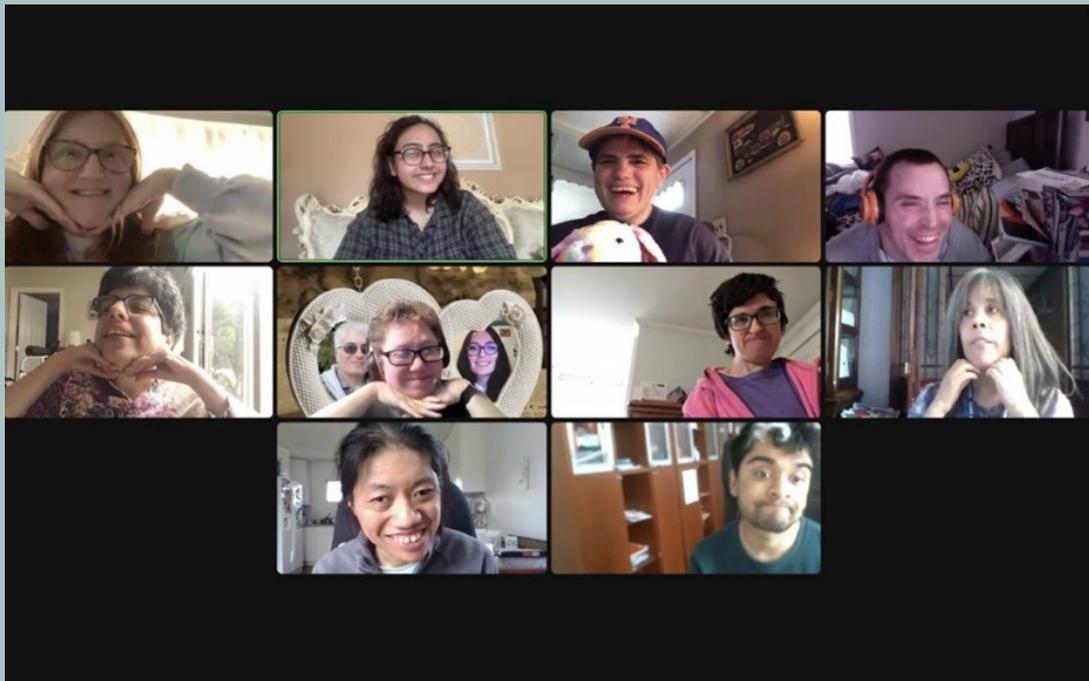
## Long Island Rally

A bipartisan call to action to invest in the future of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the people who support them was held on Friday, March 8th, 2024 at the NYS Office Building in Hauppauge.

**We are advocating for a 3.2% COLA and \$4,000 DSWE (Direct Support Wage Enhancement)**



## Virtual Connections



Coming together online to build friendships, social skills, and increased communication, “Virtual Connections” continued to go strong long after the pandemic. “Virtual Connections” on Tuesdays and Thursdays has become a well-attended gathering led and programmed by self-advocates.

All new, and expected to begin in April, Citizens’ “Connected Pathways” will host sessions Mondays and Wednesdays from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. A respite service provided through Med Waiver, “Connected Pathways” will offer structured content, including special guest appearances, health and wellness sessions, and virtual community engagement activities. With a planned programming calendar, members can choose sessions of interest or join simply to be part of the group and fully engaged online.

## CITIZENS OPTIONS UNLIMITED Family Questionnaire 2023 - Agency Report

The family questionnaire is a vital component of Citizens Options Unlimited Compass Management Plan. The overall response rate for this year is 30.2% compared with 24.9% in 2022. The purpose of the questionnaire is to obtain family feedback, assess the level of satisfaction and improve services.

A trend is defined as a score of 89% or below. There were two agency-wide trends and a total of sixteen program trends for 2023. A summary of trends is shown below. The two agency-wide trends were:

- “Are you aware of what to do if you do not agree with a service, recommendation, etc. (if you have a complaint)?”  
The overall agency score for this question = 87%
- “Is your family member able to connect virtually to services and activities they like?”  
The overall agency score for this question = 89%.

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Residential IRA's	4	1	1	2	4	4	2	1	4
ICF Helen Kaplan & Medically Frail	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
Camp Loyaltown & Virtual Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Melville ICF	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	1	4	8
Shoreham ICF – <i>new</i>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	4	1
Self-Direction	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	0	1	1
AGENCY WIDE TRENDS	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
<b>Total Trends</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>

A Quality Improvement Plan is complete and addressed the agency and individual program trends.

Corrective action forms are completed for trends noted and maintained by the program with a copy provided to the Compass department. A site-by-site analysis of the residential program is also completed to assess trends in a particular home. Potential trends are noted at the Medford IRA, Rondell Lane IRA and the Smithtown IRA. Individual IRA reports were provided. In addition, personnel will address individual concerns/requests noted on comment sheets. A corrective action form will be completed for each concern noted and maintained on site for review during self-survey with a copy provided to the Compass department.

These results are provided for Board of Directors review and agency planning purposes.



## Matt Hofele, Pathfinder of Citizens Options Unlimited By Susan Gill-Orange



Matt Hofele, an employee at AHRC and a resident of a Citizens Options Unlimited home in Greenlawn, is not timid about his goals in life. The other day he told me that how amazed he was at the POM process, since it was within that interview he expressed his dreams of one day expanding his leadership capabilities. So it is with some excitement and celebration that Matt along with Training Manager, Leigh Fanuzzi became the second team in New York State to achieve co-certification as CQL certified interviewers. What this means to Matt is that he now takes on a role that not only highlights his abilities but affords him the avenue in which he can utilize his skill set as a leader and advocate.

The road to certification was an intense one. For six weeks, Matt and Leigh were coached weekly by the POM department trainers. They conducted trial interviews with people supported, arranged for follow up discussions and sat with the POM team to go over decision making and data collection. By the end of their training sessions, they were ready to tackle the CQL certification examination. The good news was that they passed and are now certified by CQL to conduct interviews on their own as a team. This achievement has set the stage for others to work towards their co-certification giving our organization the kind of forward thinking and advocacy driven culture that we are committed to provide to the people we pledged to support. It also gives evidence of the effectiveness the POM process has on fulfilling the visions of so many.

But Matt has not stopped there. He is also an enterprising craftsman having raised money for JDRF through the sale of his crocheted items. In fact, he was one of the vendors at the Wheatley Farm and Arts Fall Festival. He is taking his entrepreneurship very seriously and is looking to expand his sales base. In addition to his leadership roles, Matt is also an advocate for independent living within the congregate home setting. Because he desired to live a more self-governing lifestyle, but needs the medical oversight of an IRA, he was able to negotiate with executive management to redesign his living space within his current residence which has resulted in the remodeling of the basement area into a private apartment for Matt.

Citizens has a lot to be proud about but the accomplishments and team efforts by people like Matt Hofele give the kind of optimism and guidance for others to follow their own roads to successful living.



## Putting People First at Camp Loyaltown By Kate Zimmerman



In 2023, Citizens POM department travelled to Camp Loyaltown to introduce international staff to the person-centered culture and philosophy of our organization. Through a brief presentation about Compass and CQL Accreditations as well as the Personal Outcomes interview process, staff learned about the organization's approach to providing services based on the idea "nothing me without me." Members of the POM team paired up with counselors to role play respectful interactions and shared thoughts about how to treat campers with respect throughout the summer. The sessions wrapped up with the groups creating a "Leadership Pizza" listing the characteristics of a good leader and the toppings that made them memorable.

When asked about the impact the person-centered training sessions had on how things went for campers the summer of 2023, self-advocate and longtime camper Michelle Rudoff shared, *"We used to have a schedule of activities and a pass to go to them. We don't have that anymore. We do activities when we want to. I chose to work in the dining hall."*

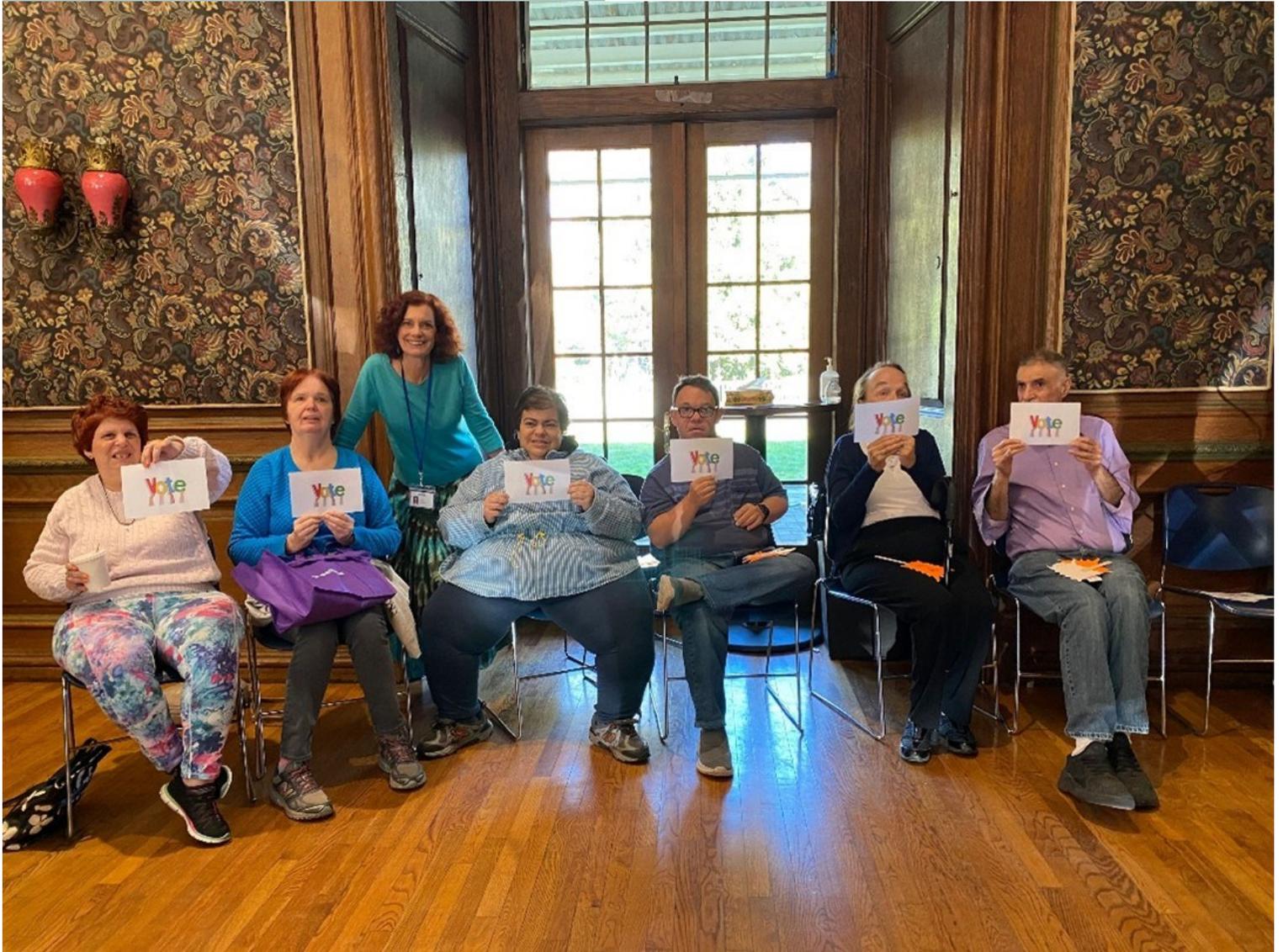
The Camp Loyaltown staff is poised and ready to continue moving forward. In June of 2024 the POM team will return to camp to promote person-centered services once again through interactive training for 150 international staff. In the off season, camp staff and the POM department are developing plans to meet for more in-depth training to enhance the person-centered experience at Camp Loyaltown.

## Enjoying the Community



Ontario residents had a blast attending *Seussical* at Argyle Theatre in Babylon. They enjoyed a fun-filled outing that included heartfelt stories featuring lively, beloved characters like the Cat in the Hat and Horton the Elephant. The show brought smiles to everyone's faces, and they even got to meet some of the cast members!





Self-advocates across our agency came together for a Rights Rally on November 2. The Rights Rally is an interactive way for people supported by our agency to learn about human and disability rights like safety, choice, and privacy. The rally was organized by **Karen Hirschfeld**, Director of Compass/QI, and **Colleen Tapia**, Compass and Quality Enhancement Administrator.

## Regulatory Affairs by Eric Rosen

Between October 2023 and March 2024, site surveys were completed for thirteen (13) Citizens IRAs. These reviews consisted of twelve (12) small IRAs and one (1) large IRA. A version of OPWDD's site-based protocol continued to be utilized for these site-based surveys.

Best practices identified during surveys completed during this reporting period include the promotion of independence, people being encouraged to participate in the routine of their home, respectful and supportive interactions, overall satisfaction, and bedrooms decorated to reflect each person's preferences and personality.



**Inform Me—Integrated Seminars Series**

**“Empowering You” airs virtually at 11:00am every Friday.**

**A DEI topic is presented on the first Friday of each month.**

**Join for information and ideas to assist you**

**to live the life you want!  
September**

**What is an Elected Official? Who are our elected Officials?**

**October**

**Advocacy and Elections**

**How to exercise your right to vote.**

**DEI - Ableism**

**November**

**Elections!**

**Voting, Results and What Comes Next**

**DEI – Gender Bias and Sexism**

**December**

**Building Relationships with Elected Officials**

**DEI – Sexual Orientation &**

**LGBTQIA+ Community**

**For information or registration:**

**Call Kate Zimmerman at  
516-293-2016, ext. 5104**

**Join us for future webinars via Zoom right from your own home!**

**Open to members of the community, family members and advocates**

**Spring 2024 Date TBD 5:00-6:00pm**

**Guardianship Evolution. Supported Decision Making, Wills and Trusts**

**Join us to learn about Guardianship, Wills and Trusts for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities**

**Summer 2024 Date TBD**

**Systems Advocacy**

**Join us to gain a working knowledge of systems advocacy.**

**We'll discuss some of the ways you can make positive changes in attitudes, policies, systems and laws that impact people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.**

**For information or registration,**

**please visit our website at**

**[www.citizens-inc.org](http://www.citizens-inc.org)**

**or email [lfanuzzi@ahrc.org](mailto:lfanuzzi@ahrc.org) or**

**Call:516-293-2016, ext. 5369**

**Seasoned camper Noah Probert can't wait for this upcoming summer!**

**"I'm excited to come to Camp this summer because it's the 50th year of Camp Loyaltown and this camp is my happy place.**

**The activities I am looking forward to the most is music and the pool. A fun fact about me is that I love sports and being on Facebook."**



# Valued Outcomes The Compass Committee & The Quality Enhancement Process

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## AHRC Nassau and Citizens: 2023 QUALITY ENHANCEMENTS

In 2023, there were 16 quality improvement goals as well as enhancements, with 12 % of the goals/objectives met. As we enter the New Year, it is wonderful to look back on all the efforts set forth and share some of the successes of 2023. AHRC Nassau and Citizens looks forward to an extraordinary 2024!

### Factor One: Rights Promotion and Protection:

- Policy developed and approved for Financial Decision Making. All people are now presumed to have capacity.
- A Human Rights Committee review is now required if a person desires to make financial decisions and their support team is not in agreement.
- Financial Decision-Making Determination of Capacity form developed and in use.
- Money Management Assessment revised to include skills or accommodations which will support the person to not have a Representative Payee, if so desired.
- Informed consent required for financial restrictions, including (if person objects) Representative Payee.
- Rights Rally held 11/2/2023 with a focus on Rights and Responsibilities.

### Factor Two: Dignity and Respect:

- A revised policy was drafted this year for Person Centered Planning. Approval to include CQL Personal Outcome Measures and Person-Centered planning within 90 days of enrollment, three times per year for Person Centered Planning experience.
- Person Centered Experience Event was created and will be held twice a year. The initial event was held in May 2023 and was a great success! The next event is scheduled for January 2024.
- Enhanced training on Person-Centered Planning for professional staff is planned for 2024.

### Factor 3: Natural Supports

- AHRC Nassau was awarded a grant that subsidized the cost to support a group of self-advocates to go to SANYS's conference in Albany this year to build social capital with other self-advocates across the state.
- Everyone was thrilled to be able to return to a large Thanksgiving gala gathering which had not been possible due to Covid. It has always been a great event that people enjoy and a way to reconnect and meet new people.
- People hosted many wonderful events such as milestone birthdays and holidays with friends and families at their homes.
- Expansion continued to be a focus at Wheatley Farms and Arts. Recent developments included the opening of the "Big Tree Gift Shop" at the greenhouse. This presented a new great employment opportunity for many people.
- Citizens Recreation and Respite also added two additional meeting sites in Nassau County where people gather weekly to enjoy community activities with friends.
- Closure of 915 and 919 Rainbow Commons ICF's began in 2023, providing people with choice and opportunity for their new homes.
- 2023 brought engagement of community members at the Shoreham ICF with many new connections and relationships formed. Community connections were made with local schools and businesses, for reciprocal events and exchange, including restaurants, farm stands, music schools and the High School.

### Factor 4: Protection from Abuse, Neglect, Mistreat Exploit

- The Quality Assurance Department successfully investigated and managed a total of 520 incidents in 2023.
- The goal to reduce staff conflict resulting in an incident by 5% was not met. However, in response to this trend, a special committee was formed to develop and enhance staff training and offer support to staff on avoiding conflicts and maintaining professionalism in the workplace. Examples of incidents involving staff conflict were brought to the committee and training was developed that will be offered both in-person and on Relias. In addition, all incidents involving staff are brought to the attention of HR business partners for additional staff support as needed.
- 2023 incident review committee members include representatives from the Human Resources Department.

### Factor 5: Best Possible Health

- A cheat sheet was developed and is in use for staff who float/cover in alternate locations due to the staffing crisis to aid in their quick knowledge of a people's supports/guidelines. We are currently monitoring self-survey data to see if there has been an impact to citations, especially float staff and staff who work in Day Hab with large numbers of people supported.
- Decrease in medication errors; The Nursing staff continue to focus every month on supporting staff to decrease medication errors. A small decrease occurred throughout 2023 which we hope to be able to attribute to filling many vacant nursing positions throughout this year and ending 2023 fully staffed with RNs in both Citizens and AHRC for several months which had not happened in many years.
- Emergency Drills: Each quarter, a team of nurses visits the residences and role play emergency scenarios that require the staff to respond. Staff are observed and debriefed on aspects that went well and aspects requiring improvement. This is a best practice that has been recommended by OPWDD's Mortality Review Committee and the Justice Center's Prevention Unit. It prepares staff for actual emergencies they may encounter while working. We are so pleased there were only 2 self-survey citations across all agencies/programs in emergency response which we attribute to this ongoing practice that we will certainly continue into 2024 and ongoing. Self-survey data is used to target areas where emergency preparedness can improve (i.e. responding to falls, choking, etc.)
- Dance Fit back for 2024! We are looking forward to the return of Dance Fit Club to Wheatley Farms in 2024 as it is a wonderful activity focused on helping people move their bodies in a way that is fun, allows for opportunities for socializing with members of the local community and doesn't feel like exercise.

#### Factor 6: Safe Environments

- The implementation of enhanced training and guidance for the maintenance staff in addressing emergency 'No Heat' and 'No A/C' calls has resulted in a notable decrease in the number of work orders related to these issues. Beyond inspecting the HVAC unit and thermostat, the attending maintenance worker ensures that all windows and doors are securely closed and sealed during their assessment of the residence. Subsequently, they provide instructive insights to the staff regarding how addressing these issues is pivotal in alleviating the primary factors contributing to an uncomfortable interior environment and the potential malfunctions of HVAC units.
- In the year 2023, we implemented a revision to the rotation of our maintenance on-call shift for increased efficiency. Now, a single maintenance worker is assigned on-call duties for the entire week, seamlessly transferring responsibility to the next worker on Monday morning. This streamlined process has significantly contributed to the continuity in addressing on-call, after-hours issues.
- This year, the Facilities Maintenance team assumed the role of compiling maintenance-related documented citations pertaining to all sites. This encompassed the capture of citations and deficiencies identified by OFPC, Quality Assurance, and Board Member inspection reports. The captured information is categorized and analyzed for trends with targeted issues then addressed and tracked.
- The Maintenance Team has initiated the implementation of a procedure to install keyed locks on every bedroom door. The team is proactively obtaining all necessary materials, conducting in-house rekeying of locks, and undertaking the installations.

#### Factor 7: Staff Resources and Supports

- Utilized applicant tracking system ICMS AI Chatbot feature.
- Over 100 site visits while engaging people supported and obtaining feedback.
- Implemented a Buddy System during orientation and paired new hires with one another. Forming a partnership and bond for a support system.
- Created a more engaging newsletter with hyperlinks, a career page, and new hire photos.
- Further enhanced and marketed tuition reimbursement with a focus on part-time staff working a minimum of 21 hours/week.
- Hyper focus on NADSP EBadge Academy to market and have DSPs complete three different Badge levels.

#### Factor 8: Positive Services and Supports

- Efforts continue to ensure the least restrictive interventions are in place: New types of rights restrictions included in Behavior Support Plans (BSPs) in the past year reflect less intrusive alternatives as well as meeting the unique needs of new people supported by AHRC and Citizens.
- A policy on use of Safety Equipment, and a related Safety Equipment Screening Questionnaire, have been developed. Once implemented, it will eliminate Behavior Support Plans for people only in need of safety equipment.

#### Factor 9: Continuity and Security

- Collaboration with the Talent Acquisition Team AT team in 2023 has yielded an increase in qualified and dedicated staff to support people daily. Additionally, ongoing advocacy efforts with state legislation have allowed for all staff in both corporations employed with the agency to receive a 4% cost of living increase, further strengthening retention efforts with the existing workforce.
- 2023 brought focusing on increased community-based activities and assist people in reconnecting with friends, neighbors and local businesses creating a network of natural community-based supports.

#### Personal Outcome Measures (POM)

- Approximately 150 people attended a presentation entitled "A Voice for Choice" hosted on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023 to better understand their choices regarding day activities. An additional 800 people received training on choosing services through a series of weekly "Voice for Choice" workshops. We look forward to continuing to support people's ever-evolving personal choices!
- Congratulations to Matt Hofele and Leigh Fanuzzi on their certification as CQL Personal Outcome Co-Interviewers. They are the second team in NYS to achieve this unique CQL co-certification!
- In May and December, upcoming high school graduates (from BCCS, Bellmore-Merrick SD, Massapequa HS etc.) participated in a "Discovering You," series of workshops to assist them in identifying their future dreams and goals as well as an action plan. The students really enjoyed creating their vision boards and are looking forward to acting on their plans!
- Discovering You Community Event Day was held to support students to present their vision for their own life.
- Camp Loyaltown employees enjoyed learning cultural objectives and how to use CQL Personal Outcome Measures as well as discovery tools to gain insight into people's interests and how to support them to be meet their life goals. Based on the great feedback received, this one-day training will also be provided to Wheatley Farms and Arts employees in 2024!
- The annual POM Rally was held in May 2023 to inspire and celebrate people's successes. The rally was a lively and entertaining celebration of personal outcomes and featured keynote speakers from CQL, SANYS and a welcome from Executive staff. In addition, a POM's Banner contest was enjoyed by many! It was a fun and creative way to portray aspects of the POM process.
- Citizens Board of Directors enjoyed training on *Natural Supports and Social Roles*, and *Impacting Person-Centered Culture, One POM at a time*. Both trainings focused on enhancing our agencies person-centered culture one person at a time!
- The "Empowering You" learning series and **Show Us your POMs** continued in 2023, providing people with education and skills to help them achieve their life goals!

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