



New York State Association  
of Day Service Providers

[www.nysadsp.org](http://www.nysadsp.org)



# 2026 Symposium Program

September 23rd, 24th, and 25<sup>th</sup> 2026  
The Embassy Suites Saratoga Springs  
Saratoga Springs, New York



## NYSADSP Board Members

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President

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By Laws

Avery Valins,  
Treasurer

Michael Kaplan,  
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Communications

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Membership

Wendy Schoenfeld,  
Symposium Committee  
Chair

Heather Zeiner,  
Social Media/Information  
Systems

# Regional Directors

|                                |                            |                              |                          |
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| Dalinda Caceres, New York City | Mark Nace, Southeast       | Karen Gandolfo, Central East | Kelly Byrne, Long Island |
| James Beaumont, Central West   | Lindsey Rosenberg, Western |                              |                          |

# Assistant Regional Directors

|                                 |                          |                              |                           |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Wendy Schoenfeld, New York City | Kathy Schiavi, Southeast | Victoria Looby, Central East | Grace Chiang, Long Island |
| Mandy Boyd, Central West        | Mike Zazzara, Western    | New region                   |                           |

# 04

## Symposium Essentials



### About this event

Join us for the NYSADSP 2026 Symposium, a three-day in-person event that will take place from September 23rd to September 25th at The Embassy Suites in Saratoga Springs, NY, USA. This symposium is a unique opportunity to connect with industry professionals, learn about the latest trends in the field, and share your insights and experiences. Don't miss out on this exciting event where you can expand your knowledge, network with like-minded individuals, and enjoy the beautiful surroundings of Saratoga Springs. Mark your calendars and get ready for an unforgettable experience at the NYSADSP 2026 Symposium!



### Symposium Registration

The 2026 NYSADSP Symposium registration will be available online through Humanitix platform. If you wish to pay via check you will have the option to be invoiced for payment upon checkout. Registration is due by **September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026**.

Checks payable to:  
New York State Association of Day Service Providers  
Mail payment to:  
NYSADSP  
1820 Lemoyne Ave.  
Syracuse, NY 13208



### Online registration:

[CLICK HERE](#)



### Hotel Registration

To reserve a room at The Embassy Suites, Saratoga Springs for the 2026 Symposium please click the link or scan the QR code below. For additional reservation questions please get in touch with the hotel directly by phone. There are a limited number of rooms available under the group rate, so don't delay.



Embassy Suites, Saratoga Springs  
86 Congress Street  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866



518.290.9090



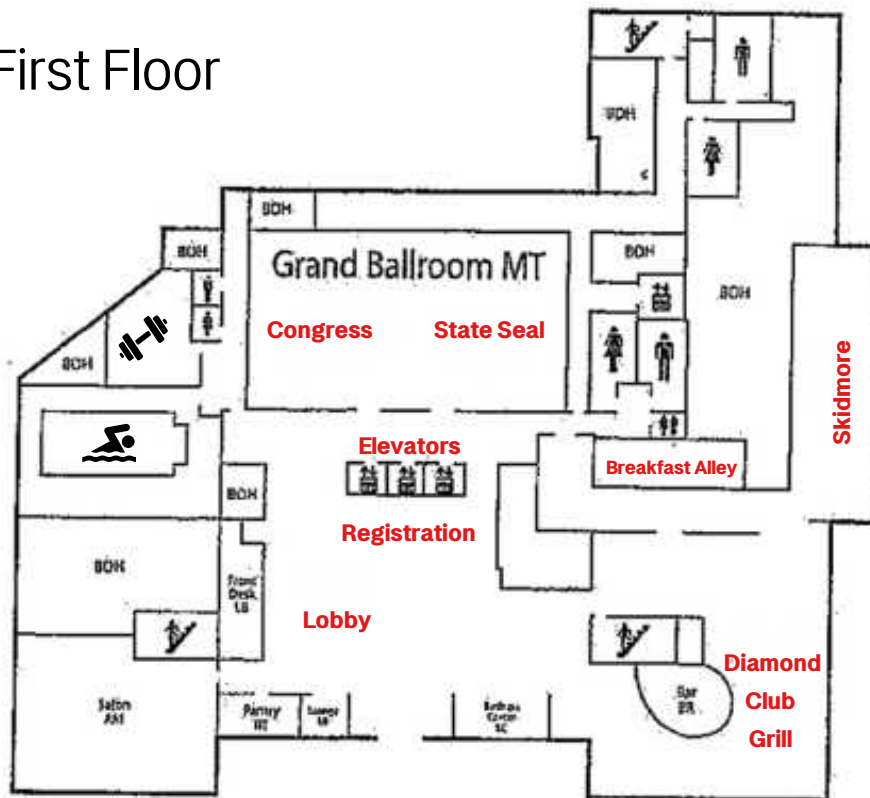
Register Online:

[CLICK HERE](#)

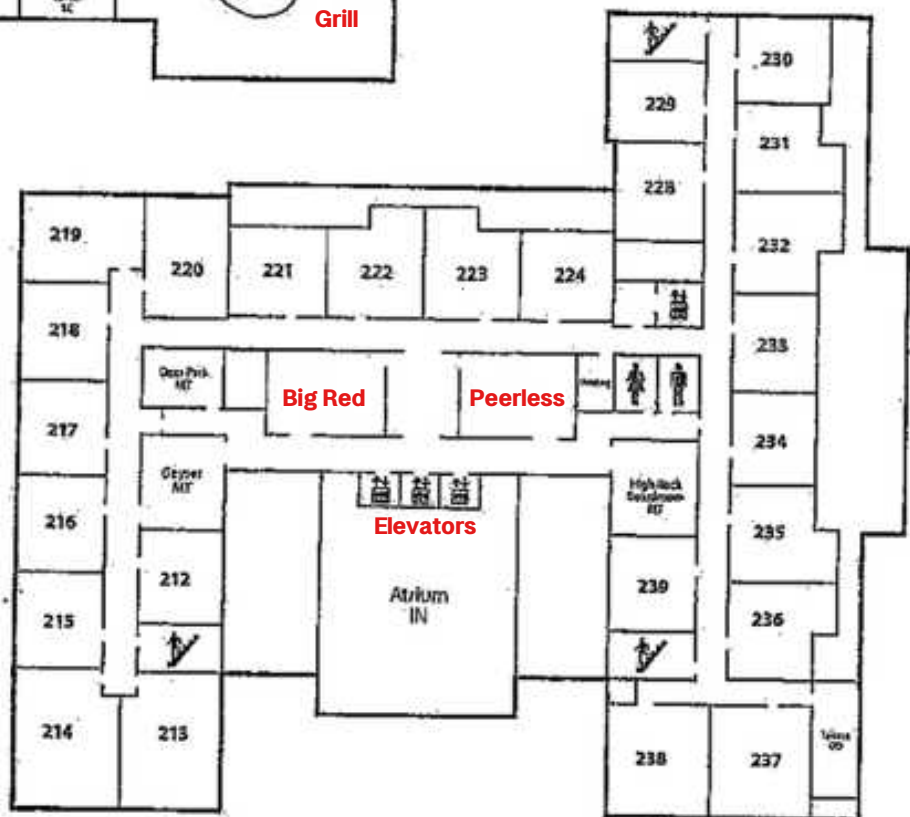


## 2026 NYSADSP Symposium

### First Floor



### Second Floor



# 06

## Agenda of the Symposium

Wednesday  
September 23rd | 2026

### Attend & Win!

Join us for each session on Wednesday, 9/23 to earn one raffle ticket per session attended.

All tickets will be entered into an exclusive drawing after our last session on Wednesday!

Gather by registration for the drawing. We will be raffling off a brand new Kindle e-reader and a Ninja Slushie Machine. Don't miss out—every session boosts your chances to win!

Thursday  
September 24th | 2026



11:00 AM - 4:30 PM  
Conference Check-In/ Registration  
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM  
Lunch Available in Breakfast Alley

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Session I

2:15 PM - 3:15 PM

Session II

3:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Session III

5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Please join fellow attendees in the Skidmore room off the hotel dining area to connect and discuss the day's sessions. One complimentary beverage on behalf of NYSADSP.

Utilize the two complimentary drinks provided during the Embassy Suite's Happy Hour!

## New this year!

Lunch available on Wednesday  
between 11:30 AM- 1:00PM

### JOIN US

Join us in Skidmore for our  
Thursday evening reception  
and basket raffles!

*Not Staying at  
the Embassy?*

**Grab a ticket for  
breakfast from the  
registration table, on us!**

07:00 AM - 9:00 AM  
Breakfast available in Breakfast Alley  
09:00 AM - 10:30 AM  
Welcome and Awards Presentation  
10:45 AM - 11:45 AM  
Keynote: Robert Budd CEO, FREE

11:30 AM - 12:45 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM

Session I



# 07

## Agenda of the Symposium

Thursday

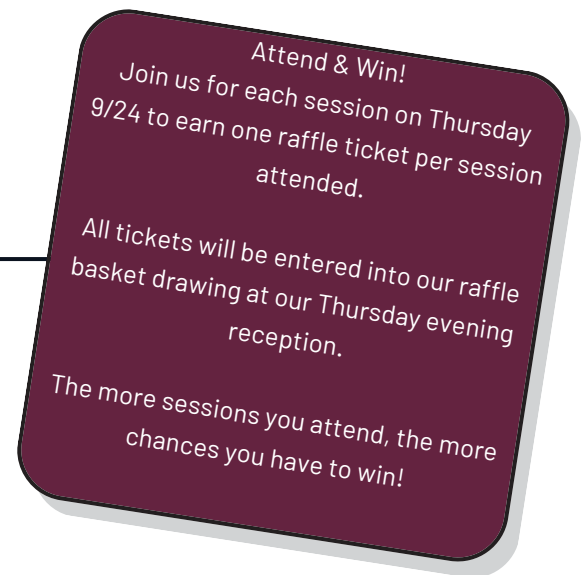
September 24th | 2026



2:45 PM - 3:45 PM  
Session II

5:00 PM - 6:30 PM  
Cocktail Hour

All Symposium attendees are invited to join us for Cocktail Hour and Raffles in the Embassy Suites Foyer/Vendor area. Light hors d'oeuvres are available. Use the complimentary beverage tickets provided at check-in/registration.



Friday

September 25th | 2026

**Must Be  
Present  
to WIN!**



7:00 AM - 9:00 AM

Breakfast available in the Saratoga Foyer/Vendor area.

9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Session I

10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Closing Presentation & Raffles in Ballroom

Stay for a Chance to Win!  
Join us after Friday morning's sessions  
for a chance to win:

- A Skyline Calendar
- A free night at Embassy Suites Saratoga Springs

Winners will be announced  
immediately after the sessions!





# 2026 Awards Presentation

Thursday, September 24th

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

## Leadership Award

The Leadership Award is for those who provide direct supervision of Direct Support Professionals. It is awarded to leaders who have provided strong and consistent leadership for direct support staff and exemplifies these qualities consistently.

## Direct Support Professional of the Year

The Direct Support Professional of the Year Award is for those staff who provide direct support services for individuals in some capacity. It is awarded to DSPs who have demonstrated exemplary performance over the course of his/her employment, and who have been dedicated to assuring quality and promoting independence.

## Innovation Grants

Every year NYSADSP awards grants to provider members who submit proposals that will be used to develop new creative programming ideas that exemplify quality programming and identify best practices. Innovation Grant winners are asked to present or host a vendor table at the Annual Symposium to share these unique ideas with other providers who can also utilize these ideas in their own programs.



## 2026 Award Recipients

### Leadership Awards

Tasha Barron  
JM Murray



Karen Greene  
The Arc of Madison Cortland



Derrick Miranda  
People Inc



Lisa Pollard  
Arc of Westchester



Nicole Soto  
Abilities First



Miguel Torres Castro  
Community Mainstreaming Associates



# 2026 Award Recipients

## Direct Support Professional Awards

Malik Gaye  
Abilities First



Meghan Hammond  
Mountain Lake Services



Laurette Holst  
AHRC Nassau



Shannon Phillip  
Lifespire



Andrea Powell  
SUS Inc.



Therese Sheppard  
People's Arc of Suffolk



## 2026 Award Recipients

### Innovation Awards



# 2026 Award Recipients

## Team Awards

The Arc Lexington



Katlyn Ladd  
Bonnie Ruess

The Arc Ontario



Dr. Claudia Coen  
Nathan Merrill  
Christopher Ellison

# 13

## Wednesday, September 23rd

### 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM



**Julie  
Keeney**

Recreation and Fitness Specialist

[jkeeney@arcmonroe.org](mailto:jkeeney@arcmonroe.org)

**Phyllis  
Erhmentraut**

Horticulture Specialist

[perhmentraut@arcmonroe.org](mailto:perhmentraut@arcmonroe.org)

#### 1. Universal Inclusive Experiences

We will be focusing on staff education regarding day programming activities. Our focus will be on initiatives that are universal in scope but have varying impacts on individuals within group activities and all-inclusive community experiences.



**Steve  
Cirillo**

Sr. Director of Day Services

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**Karen  
Brittain**

Sr. Assistant Director of Day Services

[brittain@thearclexington.org](mailto:brittain@thearclexington.org)

#### 2. Engaged and Empowered: A Wellness Practice

Engaged and Empowered Program is a comprehensive wellness initiative embedded across our Day Habilitation services that supports individuals in achieving healthier, more fulfilling lives. People develop individualized wellness plans using an evidence-based health curriculum developed at University of Illinois- Chicago. The program promotes physical health, emotional well-being and community engagement. This program is built on eight dimensions of wellness, it provides inclusive, interest driven opportunities that empower people to make sustainable lifestyle changes and reach their personal goals.

We have developed a metric based system that allows us to track each person's progress toward their goals. We use Motivational interviewing techniques and Clinical supports to ensure that each person has the best opportunity to succeed.

# 14

## Wednesday, September 23rd

### 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM



#### 3. Stronger Together

**Yaritsza**

**Guzman**

Assistant Director

[yguzman@cpofnys.org](mailto:yguzman@cpofnys.org)

**Tasha**

**Walcott**

Director of Behavioral Services

[twalcott@cpofnys.org](mailto:twalcott@cpofnys.org)

Our lecture will be based on community isolation across day programs at CP Unlimited. How the programs create opportunities for persons to have new experiences. Through these experiences, we will showcase how it creates pathways for participation and advocacy in decision-making, strengthens the community, and promotes social inclusion. This presentation also provides an innovative approach to support individuals with behavioral challenges with the use of Ukeru. This presentation will provide information on how the use of Ukeru has been found to be an effective and compassionate method for managing and reducing behaviors.



#### 4. Quality Improvement Plans and Person-Centered Practices: Making dreams a reality, one person at a time.

**Angela**

**Carotenuto-Rosen**

Director of Compliance and  
Quality Improvement

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**Kathleen  
Fischer**

Assistant Director of  
Compliance and Quality

[kathleen.fischer@yai.org](mailto:kathleen.fischer@yai.org)

**JoAnn  
Wilton**

Senior Program Director

[joann.wilton@yai.org](mailto:joann.wilton@yai.org)

A good Quality Improvement Plan should be person focused, meaningful, and actionable.

This session will show you how to turn your QI Plan and Quality Improvement Committee into powerful tools for real impact—helping the people you support achieve their personal goals and aspirations and providing an environment where they can grow and thrive.

You'll hear how YAI's Person-Centered/Quality Improvement Committee sparked the creation of regional Change Teams—collaborative groups of program leaders, DSPs, clinicians, and support staff—who review proposals submitted by the people we support and work together to bring their ideas to life.

This isn't just theory. You'll get practical guidance from YAI's Quality Department leaders on building and executing a QI plan that drives change, plus hear inspiring stories from Brooklyn's Change Team leaders that show how small actions can lead to big outcomes.

# 15

## Wednesday, September 23rd

### 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM



**Katie**

**LaFountain**

Assistant Director of  
Community Services

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**Pam**

**Mc Donald**

Speech Language Pathologist

[pmcdonald@mountainlakeservices.org](mailto:pmcdonald@mountainlakeservices.org)

#### 5. Designing Supportive Spaces: Day Hab Environments for Aging and Regression

As adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) live longer, day habilitation programs are increasingly supporting individuals experiencing aging-related changes, dementia, and other regressive conditions. The presentation helps to explore how changing or adapting the design of the environment can reduce confusion, support independence, minimize behavioral distress, and improve quality of life for aging participants. This presentation will help highlight practical strategies for adapting day habilitation spaces. Attendees will leave with hands-on ideas for creating aging-informed environments that balance safety, accessibility, and dignity while supporting both participants and staff.

# Visit Our Vendors!



# 16

## Wednesday, September 23rd

### 2:15 PM - 3:15 PM



#### 6. AI Tools for Direct Support Professionals

Presentation explores the many roles and challenges of a DSP and how AI can be used for efficiency in the role.

**Rob**

**Hendel**

Senior VP of Cloud Strategy

[RHandel@myLDI.com](mailto:RHandel@myLDI.com)

**Christina**

**Goerler**

Account Manager

[CGoerler@myLDI.com](mailto:CGoerler@myLDI.com)



#### 7. C.O.R.E.: CMA's Program Without Walls: An Innovative Model

CMA will share its innovative Program Without Walls, a person-centered model designed to empower participants through four core elements: Technology, Arts, Lifestyle, and Vocational Skills. Attendees will explore how curriculum-based workshops, community experiences, and strategic partnerships create meaningful opportunities for individuals to build independence, foster inclusion, and enhance productivity based on their unique strengths and goals. The program is intentionally designed around participant preferences, informed by survey data and individualized input, ensuring that each experience reflects personal interests, strengths, and desired outcomes.

**Miguel**

**Torres-Castro**

Director of Day Habilitation Services

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**Maritza**

**Morency**

Assistant Director of Day

Habilitation Services

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**Jennifer**

**Phillips**

VP of Community Programs

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# 17

## Wednesday, September 23rd

### 2:15 PM - 3:15 PM



JM Murray

**Kelly  
Robinson**

Director of Day Habilitation  
[kelly.robinson@jmmurray.com](mailto:kelly.robinson@jmmurray.com)

#### 8. Golden Years-A New Era for Day Hab

JM Murray has developed a Day Habilitation team that moves from a traditional style to a team that reflects a more "retired" atmosphere. We have determined that many individuals still value being outside their home and in the company of peers but do not necessarily want to be involved in the more active parts of the traditional Day Habilitation team. Why not enjoy "retirement" in a group style format?



**Services for the Underserved, Inc.**

"Opportunity for All"

**Sharonda  
Johnson**

Residential Habilitation Specialist  
[Sjohnson@sus.org](mailto:Sjohnson@sus.org)

**Hanz  
Medard**

Assistant Director of Behavior Services  
[hmedard@sus.org](mailto:hmedard@sus.org)

#### 9. Skill It to Win it

Skill It to Win It! is an informative training session where learning life skills is fun, practical, and rewarding! Our workshop is designed to aim at attendees with the necessary skills to help people supported among different capabilities be ready to gain confidence and independence in their daily lives. This workshop focuses on taking skills outside of the "classroom". The approach is shying away from traditional methods of teaching instead focusing on more real-life, hands-on approach to learning. In this session, we will look at training materials, modules, and discuss the importance of incidental learning with a focus on trial and error. We will also explore how advocacy and peer social/community experiences build trust and boost confidence.

# 18

## Wednesday, September 23rd

### 2:15 PM - 3:15 PM



#### Jessica Meddis

Program Coordinator  
[Jessicam@renarc.org](mailto:Jessicam@renarc.org)

#### Mitchell Brooks

Program Coordinator  
[Mbrooks@renarc.org](mailto:Mbrooks@renarc.org)

#### Renee Rochelle

Program Coordinator  
[Rochelle@renarc.org](mailto:Rochelle@renarc.org)

#### Stephanie Trask

Program Coordinator  
[stephaniet@renarc.org](mailto:stephaniet@renarc.org)

#### 10. Membership Matters: From Participation to Purpose

Join the BCS Leadership Team as they walk you through a journey that started as a pathway to promote active participation and has ultimately led their day habilitation program to a place of personal discovery and development. They will share with you the importance of Membership as they outline how the formation of four separate Committees has ignited greater independence, confidence, and self-determination for the individuals served and their staff. Listen as they reflect upon being part of something bigger- Learn of their shared successes thus far and get a sneak peek at the plans they have developed for connecting to a wider community, provide opportunities for participants, and experiences that extend far beyond any one setting. Throughout this session you will be reminded that day program should be a launching point, not a destination or boundary. Staff, peers, community partners, and clubs inspire walking alongside individuals as companions and guides, helping to open doors, expand possibilities, and support each person's journey forward

## 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM



#### Lana Small

Regional Deputy Director,  
Community Habilitation and In-  
Home Respite Services  
[lane.small@yai.org](mailto:lane.small@yai.org)

#### 11. Building A Full Life: How Community Hab, Self Direction, and Day Services can Align to Support What Matters Most

We offer good services—but too often, they don't add up to a full life. What might change if we intentionally align them around what truly matters to the person?

Community Habilitation, Self-Direction, and day services each play an important role in supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities—but too often, services operate in isolation. The result can be fragmented supports that do not fully reflect what matters most to the person. This session introduces a practical approach to aligning services to support a more connected, meaningful life. Through actionable strategies and real-world application, this session will help providers move beyond simply delivering services to intentionally connecting supports across facets of a person's life.

# 19

## Wednesday, September 23rd

3:30 PM - 4:30 PM



Services for the Underserved, Inc.

"Opportunity for All"

**Mike  
Hollis**

Vice President of Community  
Food Security  
[mhollis@sus.org](mailto:mhollis@sus.org)

**Dayton  
Smalls**

Urban Farmer  
[daysmalls810@gmail.com](mailto:daysmalls810@gmail.com)

### 12. Cultivating Leadership from Within: Participatory Approaches to Engaging People with I/DD

What happens when people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are not just participants, but decision-makers shaping the programs that impact their lives? At Services for the UnderServed (S:US), participatory leadership is redefining engagement by centering individuals as leaders across community-based food security initiatives. From co-designing urban farm sites and guiding seasonal planning, to stewarding community fridges and sustaining the partnerships that keep them stocked and accessible, participants are actively shaping systems of care. They also lead trainings and workshops, mentor peers through advocacy groups, and serve on community juries that influence strategic directions. This session highlights how shifting from service delivery to shared leadership builds ownership, strengthens skills, and fosters accountability—offering a replicable model for organizations seeking to embed equity, voice, and community-driven impact into their work.



**Kathleen  
Radecki**

Program Director  
[kathleen.radecki@people-inc.org](mailto:kathleen.radecki@people-inc.org)

**Jeremy  
Harris**

Program Director  
[jeremy.Harris@people-inc.org](mailto:jeremy.Harris@people-inc.org)

### 13. Supporting Adults with Autism

This workshop will be a resource for people to learn about Autism within day program settings and how to support the needs of everyone on the spectrum. The goal of this is to help agencies understand that an ASD diagnosis can range and that there are a variety of ways to best provide functional support while maintaining a person-centered approach, tailored to each person. It will help show ways to create safe, active, and supportive environments that also encourage growth and development whether it be personal or social.

# 20

## Wednesday, September 23rd

3:30 PM - 4:30 PM



**Melissa  
Garner**

Director of Community  
Supports  
[Melissa.Garner@thearcas.org](mailto:Melissa.Garner@thearcas.org)

### 14. Community Inclusion: What it is and how to track.

The presentation will inform the audience of the beginning process of having a Community Inclusion Committee, the steps to form the ISP Program to track Community Inclusion, the struggles with implementation, and how the struggles were corrected. The presentation will include what is tracked by the Arc Allegany-Steuben, how it is tracked, what it is used for, and that the hopes are for in the future. Current training materials will be offered to participants as to how the Arc Allegany-Steuben trains current and new associates. This will include success stories of people supported and stories from associates.



**Tara  
Packer**

Vice President of Day Services  
[tpacker@achieveny.org](mailto:tpacker@achieveny.org)

### 15. ACHIEVE's Innovative Day Services

In this presentation, the team from ACHIEVE will share practical approaches they are using to innovate day habilitation programming in ways that strengthen community inclusion, expand individual choice, and improve day-to-day outcomes for people receiving services.

# Key Note Speaker

Thursday, September 24th

10:45 AM – 11:45 AM



**Robert S. Budd** is the Senior CEO and President of *Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE)*, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting individuals of all abilities through community living opportunities, employment services, day programs, clinical supports, crisis services, education, after-school programming, and other essential services.

Mr. Budd joined FREE in 1985 and was appointed Chief Executive Officer in 2008. During his tenure, he has helped guide the organization's remarkable growth—from a \$1 million annual budget serving 45 individuals in 1985 to a network of organizations providing more than \$170 million in services and supporting over 5,500 individuals annually as of 2025. He also expanded FREE's reach to a national level by establishing entities in Maryland and soon to be Florida.

A champion of innovation in the human services field, Mr. Budd developed the Network structure to help smaller organizations gain the efficiencies and strength of a larger collaborative system. He also introduced a unique executive leadership co-leader model designed to foster collaboration and sustainable leadership.

Mr. Budd remains actively engaged across the sector and serves on numerous boards, including the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) and the ANCOR Foundation, as well as the New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation, Interagency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc., Long Island Select Healthcare, Inc., Alliance of Long Island Agencies, Inc., New York Disability Advocates, Inc., ACA/NY Advance Care Alliance, and the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals, Inc.

In addition to his leadership roles, Mr. Budd dedicates time to consulting and speaking. He is an AMA and Covey-certified facilitator, a Certified Executive Coach, and is passionate about mentoring and developing future leaders. He has received numerous awards for leadership and innovation and serves as a lecturer at Stony Brook University's School of Professional Development.

## Passion, Purpose, & Possibilities

Creating Positive Energy: Leading with Purpose, Passion, and Innovation

In a time of constant change, the work we do has never been more important. This engaging session explores how purpose, passion, and intentionality can inspire innovation and strengthen our impact as leaders and professionals.

Drawing on the science of change and more than 40 years of leadership experience in human services, Robert shares practical strategies for building resilience, embracing strengths, and creating positive energy that transforms teams and organizations. Through inspiring stories and actionable insights, participants will discover how to lead with intention, foster collaboration, and develop a mindset that turns challenges into opportunities.

Attendees will leave energized, empowered, and equipped with practical tools to cultivate positive change, inspire others, and bring renewed purpose and passion to their everyday work.

# 22

## Thursday, September 24th

### 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM



**Sharon**

**Geiselmann**

Professional Development  
Training Specialist

[sgeiselmann@familyres.org](mailto:sgeiselmann@familyres.org)

**Jennifer**

**Suchan**

VP of Training and  
Professional Development

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#### 16. Developing People-Strengthening Retention

A strong organizational learning culture isn't just nice to have – it's a powerful predictor of an employee's decision to stay or leave their job. A work culture that invests in professional development and crafts clearly defined career pathways, says "you matter here, we see a future for you". Organizations that embed learning into their culture retain more staff over time. 94% of employees say they are more likely to stay when companies invest in their development.

Training isn't just skill building, it drives engagement, which is strongly tied to retention. Without organizational investment in learning and growth opportunities, staff feel stagnant and start looking elsewhere. Staff in the Human Services field, specifically Direct Support Professionals and Front-Line Supervisors, face complex, emotionally demanding situations daily. DSPs and Front-Line Supervisors who receive ongoing training and see a clear career pathway feel valued, supported and connected. If employees see a future – they hopefully will stay!

Professional development gives DSPs the skills to succeed and Front-Supervisors the tools to support them – together that is what drives Retention. This session will showcase FREE's Professional Development Roadmap, FREE's Direct Support Professional Learning Academy, FREE's Leadership Launchpad as well as FREE's recent strategies to improve retention to help build a positive organizational culture.



**Michael**

**Kitakis**

Executive Director

[michael@spiritofhuntington.com](mailto:michael@spiritofhuntington.com)

**Diane**

**Young**

Founding Board Member

[diane@spiritofhuntington.com](mailto:diane@spiritofhuntington.com)

#### 17. A Collaborative Approach to Strengthening Local Nonprofits

This workshop introduces a collaborative Community Hub model that helps nonprofits share resources, expand services, and increase impact. Through real-world examples and a hands-on art experience, participants will gain practical strategies to strengthen programs and build more connected, inclusive communities.

# 23

## Thursday, September 24th

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM



### Consuelo Senior

Director of YAI Knowledge,  
Mental Health Clinician  
[connie.senior@YAI.ORG](mailto:connie.senior@YAI.ORG)

### 18. You Can't Pour from an Empty Cup

As a support professional, at any level, frontline to executive, working in this industry requires the "giving of ones self" How do you do that day after day without burnout? "Work-Life balance? What is that? When you are at work, are you giving the best of you every day? Or what's left of you? Attend this workshop and gain practical tools to help you bring your best self to work, while "life be lifing" .

Attendees will explore:  
Things /practices that deplete us  
Intentional practices that fills us  
Work life management



### Scott Robinson

Learning and Organizational  
Development Administrator  
[srobinson@cfdnsny.org](mailto:srobinson@cfdnsny.org)

### 19. Voices That Matter: Building an Advocacy Program

This session will highlight how we built an Advocacy Program from the ground up and how it evolved into the A-Team – a powerful group of self-advocates using their voices to create meaningful change within the agency and throughout the community. From educating others about their rights to speaking at rallies and advocating for systemic change, the A-Team continues to demonstrate that there are no limits to what people can achieve when empowered to lead.

Participants will gain practical strategies for developing their own advocacy program and fostering opportunities for people to discover, strengthen, and use their voices with confidence.

# 24

## Thursday, September 24th

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM



**Grace  
Chiang**

Director of Day Services  
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**Jahliek  
Dyer**

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### 20. Color Wars

"Color Wars" is an annual inter-site field day between all of Life's WORC day habilitation programs. Drawing inspiration from collegiate sports and the Olympics, this event provides a unique opportunity for persons served from across the represented regions to interact with their peers in an engaging manner while also furthering their independent living skills. During this annual event, participants from each of the sites spend the year preparing for the upcoming games and challenges as well as prepare a strong team identity for the site as they prepare to compete with other teams to see which site may earn the title of "Color War Champion" for the year.



# 25

## Thursday, September 24th 2:45 PM - 3:45 PM



**Paige  
Koehler**

Manager of Vocational Services  
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**Christina  
Vergari**

Assistant Manager of Agriculture Services  
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### 21. Growing a Culture: Agriculture and Vocational Services

In the last 12 months, FREE has taken steps to grow our employment services, as well as identify challenges with food security, accessibility, and affordability. Our gardening and agricultural programming has benefited from both of these initiatives. In 2025-2026, through the help of services like Community Based Pre-Voc, Pathways to Employment, Supported Employment, ACCES-VR, and grant funded programs, we have been able to implement exciting features of our gardens and greenhouses that provide purpose to the individuals that we serve, as well as bolstering and strengthening our local communities with locally-grown and affordable produce.



**Harold  
Sammis**

Quality Improvement and  
Training Manager, Buddy  
Program Coordinator  
[hsammis@mountainlakeservices.org](mailto:hsammis@mountainlakeservices.org)

### 22. Improving Retention Through the Buddy Program: Celebrating Five Years

In our presentation we will be describing the process of creating our Buddy Program at Mountain Lake Services, and its implementation, and how it is affecting one of the most difficult problems in our field, employee retention. We will be discussing our processes, assessments, and data analysis as well as the impact the program is having on veteran and new Direct Support Professionals. We will have one presenter this year. We believe this topic could be of value to anyone seeking a way to improve their retention of new employees, and also to build strong lines of succession with people who are committed to the field and their work. Participants will learn about the process for building a program, as well as how we have analyzed data we have gathered to help improve it going forward. We will also be discussing the challenges we encountered as well as the successes we have enjoyed. We will also be discussing how the program has directly affected those enrolled in the program, and their experiences. This year we will also be adding a small workshop on how to set up a similar program, and how to improve data and insights through inter-departmental cooperation.

# 26

## Thursday, September 24th

### 2:45 PM - 3:45 PM



#### 23. Eisenhower Matrix Workshop

Busy all day, but still feel like you're getting nowhere? Learn how to move beyond simply being busy and start focusing your time and energy on what truly matters. In this interactive workshop, participants will use the Eisenhower Matrix to distinguish between urgent and important tasks, identify opportunities to delegate or eliminate low-impact work, and prioritize the activities that drive long-term results. Leave with practical strategies for making prioritization a daily leadership habit—and one action you can put into practice immediately.

#### **Barbara Falcone**

Vice President for Day and  
Employment service Operations  
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#### **Melissa Camacho**

Associate Vice President for Day  
Service Operations  
[Melissa.Camacho@heartshare.org](mailto:Melissa.Camacho@heartshare.org)

Office for  
People With  
Developmental  
Disabilities



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#### 24. OPWDD Partnerships and Initiatives

The Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is advancing its Strategic Plan and Employment First Executive Order 40 by building new partnerships and initiatives. The Strategic Plan involves improving services, streamlining policies, and enhancing person-centered supports. Employment First helps people explore jobs and community engagement through cross-system collaboration and offering a full array of service options. Executive Order 40 establishes competitive employment as the primary goal for people with disabilities who choose to work. Fulfilling this mission requires multi-level system changes and expanded community partnerships. OPWDD has also expanded the availability of training for day habilitation service staff and managers. Participants will learn about current developments, innovative initiatives, and new trainings available in 2027.

#### **Julia Kelly**

Director, Employment &  
Meaningful Community Activities  
[Julia.A.Kelly@opwdd.ny.gov](mailto:Julia.A.Kelly@opwdd.ny.gov)

#### **James McNaughton**

Statewide Coordinator Day and  
Community Services/Employment  
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#### **Lynne Thibdeau**

OPWDD State of the State  
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#### **Amy Scott**

Associate Director Innovations in  
Employment Services Eleversity  
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#### **Jason Zauner**

Training and Organizational  
Development Specialist II Eleversity  
[jason.zauner@eleversity.org](mailto:jason.zauner@eleversity.org)

# 27

## Friday, September 25th

9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Office for  
People With  
Developmental  
Disabilities



### 25. OPWDD DQI Updates

OPWDD Presenter will provide updates and discussion.

**Megan  
O'Connor - Hebert**  
Deputy Commissioner

**Chad  
Mitchell**  
Regional Director,  
Bureau of Program Certification

**Chris  
Darcey**  
Regional Director,  
Bureau of Program Certification

**Photo Booth**

**Fun!**

**THURSDAY RECEPTION**



# 28

## Friday, September 25th

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM



### 26. Our Broadway!

Our Broadway! was created by Dale Hensley in 2016. It is a performing arts group comprised of over 150 members supported by AHRCNYC with the help of Broadway professionals; i.e. actors, musicians, wardrobe personnel, wig designers, ushers and stage managers who work professionally in the entertainment industry. The professionals volunteer their time to help the neurodiverse community come together to create theatre, dance and music. Last year, we performed *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lion King*, *Hairspray*, *On The Town* and *White Christmas* in addition to 4 musical revues. Our upcoming season: *Cinderella*, *The Music Man*, *Once On This Island*, *Fame*, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, *A Christmas Carol* plus an original musical written by people we support at AHRCNYC with the permission and blessing of Sara Bareilles using the music from her *The Blessed Unrest* album. All of our shows are performed at the Jerry Orbach theatre which is generously donated to us by Cathy Russell. All with standing room only. All with very happy performers, their friends and family cheering them on.

#### Performers:

**Fouad Salau** attends Queens Community College. For Our Broadway, he has performed Harold Hill in *The Music Man*, Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast*, Buddy the Elf in *Elf*, Cornelius in *Hello Dolly*, Artful Dodger in *Oliver*, Chip in *On The Town*, Iago in *Aladdin*.

**Thomas Gambaro** attends the King's Highway AHRC program. He makes beautiful clay figurines of his favorite Disney characters. For Our Broadway: Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*, Prince in *Cinderella*, Ozzie in *On The Town*, Genie in *Aladdin*, Marcellus in *The Music Man*, Phil Davis in *White Christmas*, Pumba in *The Lion King*, Tony in *West Side Story*.

**Rosa Santos** attends the Redfield AHRC program. She loves all things Disney. For our Broadway: Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*, Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*, Cinderella in *Cinderella*, Tracy in *Hairspray*, Irene in *Hello Dolly*, Kim in *Bye Bye Birdie*, Betty in *White Christmas*, Jovie in *Elf*.

**Ian Miller** has been the music director for Our Broadway since 2017. Miller is a music director, pianist, arranger and orchestrator based in New York City. A versatile musician, Ian draws upon a classical piano training and an extensive background in musical theater, as well as a love of gospel, jazz, and R&B. Ian's recent music direction credits include *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Juilliard Drama Division), *Felix Starro* (world premiere, Ma-Yi Theater Co), and *Little Shop of Horrors* (Virginia Theater Festival). Ian provided the orchestrations for East West Player's 2023 world premiere of *On This Side of the World* in Los Angeles, with a cast recording soon to be released. As a pianist, Ian performed onstage in the recent Broadway revival of *Into the Woods*, and he has accompanied rehearsals for the Broadway productions of *Wicked*, *The Music Man*, and *West Side Story*. Since 2022, he has been on faculty at the Juilliard School, as a vocal coach and accompanist in the Dance Division.

# Thank You to Our 2026 Symposium Planning Committee Members

Christina  
Abbinanti  
Life's Worc

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Indera

# THANK YOU

**On behalf of the NYSADSP Board of Directors and the  
2026 Symposium Planning Committee, we would like  
to thank you for attending this year's symposium.**



**New York Association of Day Service Providers**

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