



# People First

News and Information for the OPWDD Community | Summer 2014



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## Lifestyles for Lunch

Next time you're on Staten Island, check out Lifestyles Caffé, a restaurant that serves up great food and atmosphere and dishes out some valuable community experience for individuals with developmental disabilities.

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## Front Door Update

As many of you know, the Front Door was launched last year to improve the way people access services while giving them as many opportunities as possible to direct their own service plans. As a result of your valued input, we have been able to make many improvements to the Front Door process to improve response times, streamline access to services and better manage residential opportunities. I am pleased to announce that we are in the process of rolling out significant improvements to the Front Door process which began in June with a two-day intensive training for staff. Some of the Front Door improvements will include:

- release of an informational video to ensure that all individuals and families receive consistent information about available services;

- a new Access to Services Guide for individuals and families to explain step-by-step the process of applying for OPWDD services;
- creation of a new Front Door manual for OPWDD staff to ensure consistency of process statewide; and
- new and improved processes for identifying and developing residential opportunities and supports individuals need through person-centered planning.

OPWDD will also be scheduling information sessions for all stakeholders to explain in more detail the changes to the Front Door process.

I would like to thank you for sharing your ideas and concerns as we evaluated and made the necessary improvements with this process. We will continue to seek your input as we work toward our goal of helping people with developmental disabilities live richer lives.

Kerry A. Delaney, Acting Commissioner ■

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# Message From the Editor

Welcome to the first edition of the new quarterly People First News. The OPWDD Communications team hopes you enjoy the articles inside as much as we enjoyed researching and producing them. Our goal for this newsletter is to inform you about news, programs and events, as well as share great stories from the field. We encourage you to share your stories with us for future publications.

As we roll out this summer's edition of the People First News, we want to encourage you to get out and enjoy the warm weather, and there's no greater state than New York to enjoy fun in the sun. With a vast array of parks, beaches, camping, sports and picturesque summits, New York has much to explore. Check out these sites for information on what New York has to offer.



## The I Love NY page

<http://www.iloveny.com> Lists events, places to go, things to do and places to stay as well as specific information about each region in our state.



## The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

<http://nysparks.com> Oversees 178 state parks and 35 historic sites. Here you can find information about swimming, camping, boating, hiking, hunting and a host of other activities.

## On the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's website

<http://www.dec.ny.gov> You can register for a fishing or hunting license and any other permits or licenses you may need for outdoor recreation. You can even download the new hunting and fishing app. The site also has information on camping, hiking and many other outdoor activities.

## The Business Council of NYS's website

<http://www.bcnys.org/inside/chambers.htm> Contains a listing of all the Chambers of Commerce in NYS with links to those individual sites containing information and events specific to that particular area.

However you choose to spend your summer, be safe and have fun! ■

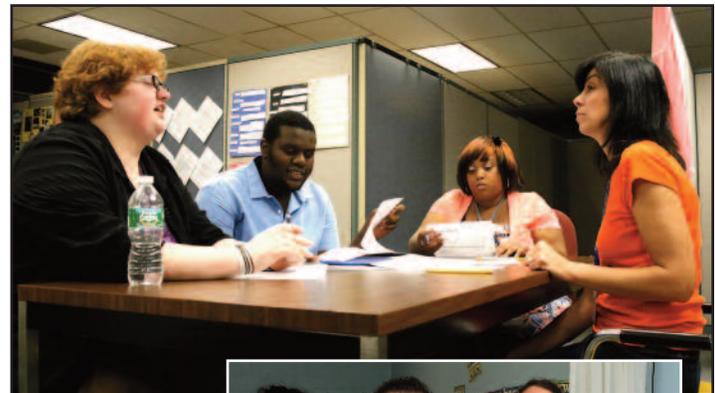


## School's Out!

The end of the school year is quickly approaching, and this is a busy time of year for students who are finishing up high school and making the transition to adult life. Leaving high school is a milestone that brings big changes and

increased opportunities for independence. OPWDD has a variety of service options available for exiting students, whether they are interested in finding a job, volunteer opportunities or structured day services which will help them to develop daily living skills. OPWDD also offers in-home residential supports and recreation programs. Individuals and families can even choose to design their own services through self-direction.

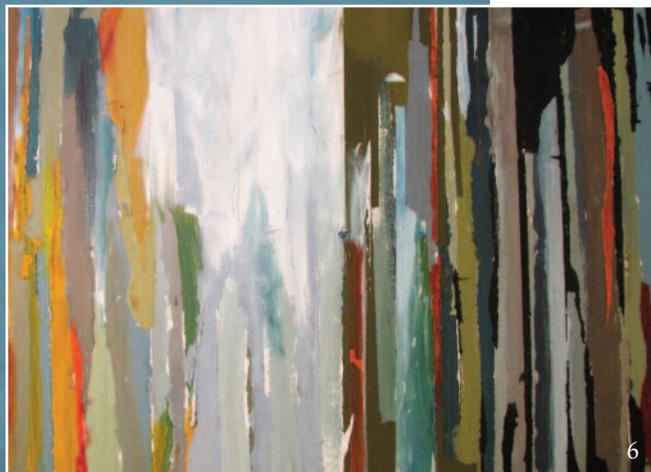
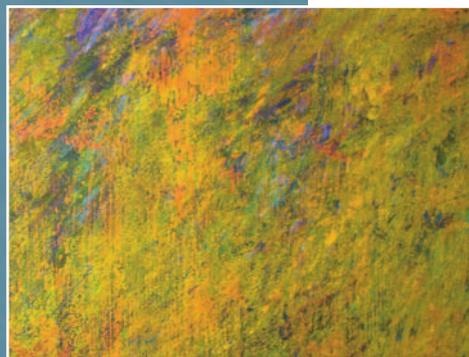
OPWDD's Transition Coordinators are available at the Developmental Disabilities Regional Offices (DDROs) and can answer your questions about transition planning and getting students started with adult services. If you want to learn more about how OPWDD can help with transition planning, please visit our website at: [http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd\\_services\\_supports/children/transition-students-developmental-disabilities](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_services_supports/children/transition-students-developmental-disabilities). ■





## Art With Heart

Featured artist Joan DeRocco hails from the Capital District. She attends art classes at the Living Resources Malta Art Studio, which operates in partnership with the Burnt Hills Day Program. Joan's instruction at the studio focuses on making personal aesthetic decisions and developing sustained, high-quality work. That work has been featured in multiple art shows and has been widely reproduced in calendars, greeting cards and online galleries. Joan's work has been shared internationally - a digital print of her work was given as a gift to partners of Living Resources in China. Joan is continuing to hone her artistic talents by exploring mixed media techniques as she builds projects into elaborate and detailed pieces. ■



- 1: Joan DeRocco holding "Cheeseburger",
- 2: "Fish"
- 3: "Day of the Dead"
- 4: "Tree"
- 5: "Abstract 2"
- 6: "Abstract3"
- 7: Joan with support staff Toni D.

## We Speak Your Language

Providing culturally and linguistically competent supports and services has become crucial to helping individuals live the meaningful lives they deserve.

Culture affects how people communicate, understand, and respond to information. Cultural competence is the ability to recognize the cultural beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions, language preferences, and health practices of diverse populations, and to apply that knowledge to produce a positive outcome.

On October 6, 2011, Governor Cuomo signed Executive Order No. 26 which directed state agencies that provide services to the public to increase their foreign language access. As of today, state agencies are now equipped to provide free

interpretation in Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Italian, Korean and Haitian Creole, the six non-English languages spoken by the majority of the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) community in New York.

At OPWDD, this means providing access to services in the following ways:

- **Translation of Vital Documents:**

All of the agency's vital documents – such as intake and eligibility forms and informational brochures – have been translated into eight of the most-commonly spoken languages: Italian, Russian, Spanish, Haitian-Creole, (a form of French), Korean, Chinese, Yiddish, and Urdu. What's more, if a person cannot read English, or has difficulty reading it, documents such as Individual Service Plans (ISPs) are translated into that person's primary language.

Translated documents are available on OPWDD's Web site at [www.opwdd.ny.gov](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov).

- **Oral Interpretation Services:**

Individuals and family members whose primary language is not English have the right, by law, to request an interpreter at every point of contact with OPWDD and with provider agencies. This means you can ask for an interpreter at doctor visits, for ISP meetings, and at any other time you need to be able to understand the supports and services being provided. If these services are not provided, persons and families have the right to file a complaint with OPWDD. For more information on how to file a complaint visit:

<http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/resources/language-access/complaint-form>. ■



OPWDD will be launching Pathway to Employment, a person-centered career planning and support service that will help individuals with developmental disabilities reach their employment goals. This service will engage individuals in identifying a career/vocational direction, provide instruction and training in pre-employment skills and develop a path for achieving competitive, integrated employment. In the coming months, OPWDD will work with voluntary agencies to educate families and individuals currently receiving day habilitation, prevocational and workshop services about the service and how it can help them transition to competitive employment. Stay tuned - training dates and locations will be released soon!

## Take the Path to Integrated Employment

### Let's Chat

OPWDD's Office of Employment and Meaningful Activities is in the process of scheduling a second round of "Community Dialogues" for the end of August. This discussion will provide you with an update on the Center for Medicaid Services Draft Employment Plan and give you the opportunity to provide input on community inclusion and the expansion of employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. Details on the dates and locations of the Community Dialogue sessions will be available in the next few weeks. ■

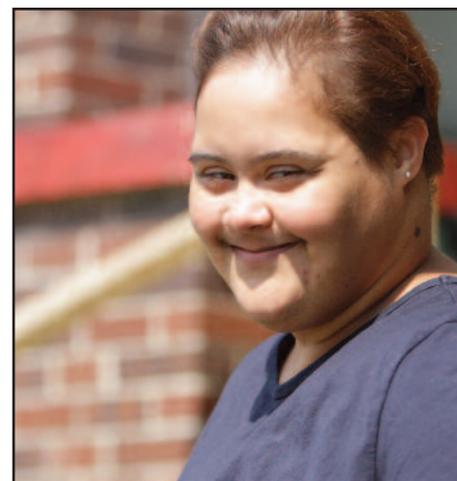


# Money Follows the Person

The federal Money Follows the Person (MFP) Demonstration helps states improve their systems of long-term care so that more people can receive the supports and services they need in community settings. Through the demonstration, NYS agencies are assisting people to move out of institutional settings such as nursing homes and Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) into homes in their communities. The demonstration tracks the changes they report in their quality of life once they move into the community and also provides enhanced federal Medicaid funding for New York State to use for improving its ability to provide long-term supports and services in community settings.

OPWDD's participation in MFP is part of the agency's 2013 Transformation Agreement with the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the agency's move to support everyone in the most integrated setting possible. Over the next several years, OPWDD will assist many people with developmental disabilities in moving from Developmental Centers (DCs), ICFs and nursing homes to less restrictive, community-based settings. Many of the people who

move will meet the criteria for participation in the MFP Demonstration and will provide valuable feedback on their experiences before and after they move into community settings.



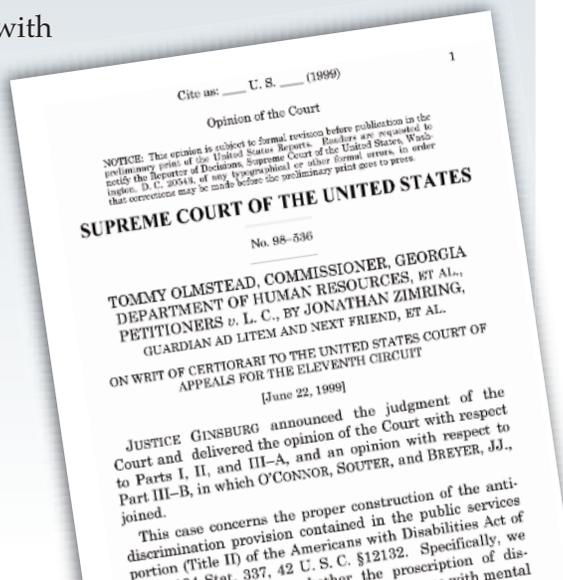
In partnership with the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State (SANYS), OPWDD exceeded the 2013 goals of transitioning 65 individuals to MFP-qualifying community settings and providing peer-based outreach to 300 people. In 2014, SANYS will again conduct outreach to residents of DCs, ICFs and nursing homes, and OPWDD will help 215 people to move to MFP-qualifying homes in their communities. For questions and comments concerning MFP email [Community.Transitions@opwdd.ny.gov](mailto:Community.Transitions@opwdd.ny.gov). ■

## Landmark Decision Marks 15th Anniversary

On June 22, 1999, the United States Supreme Court held in *Olmstead v. L.C.* that states, in accordance with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), have an obligation to provide services to individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs.

Fifteen years after the *Olmstead* decision, New York has only 700 individuals being served in an institutional capacity at six locations. Over the next three years, an additional four campuses will close, leaving the state with a projected institutional capacity of approximately 150 at the two remaining facilities.

OPWDD is committed to working with individuals currently residing in institutional settings to help them transition into community settings that best meet their needs; pursuing development of a full range of community-based supportive housing opportunities; and working to ensure that all Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver settings meet new federal standards for home-like environments. ■



## We Want to Hear from You!

Send us your story ideas, events, pictures and artwork for the chance to be featured in the People First newsletter.

Mail to: Communications Office, NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities, 44 Holland Avenue, Albany, NY 12229 or email: [Communications.Office@opwdd.ny.gov](mailto:Communications.Office@opwdd.ny.gov). You can also follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NYSOPWDD>. ■



## Meet Kayla McKeon:

Motivational Speaker, Special Olympic Athlete and in Control of her Future!

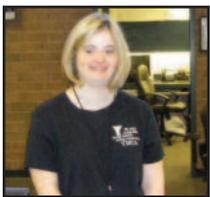
Kayla McKeon from Central New York shares her

self-direction story in her own words:

“My name is Kayla McKeon, I am 26 years old. I have been a CSS (Consolidated Supports and Services) participant for about 4-5 years. When we started my plan we set my goals for many things. I love self-directing my life. When we brainstormed ideas, I said I wanted to go to college, work in an office, volunteer, work out, become a motivational speaker advocating for the differently abled and eventually live on my own.

Currently I am working at Gigi’s Playhouse in the office. I think the Job Readiness program helped me with skills necessary in addition to my schooling.

I am pursuing my Associates Degree currently at LeMoyne College and Onondaga Community College. I am doing it slowly but I am doing it. I love Psychology. I think I am going to change my degree from General Studies to Psychology.



Volunteering at the YMCA



Kayla and her boss Debi

I also still volunteer in addition to working and school at Whole Me, an after-school program for the deaf. It keeps me up on my sign language skills in addition to helping the staff with the participants.

I work out a few days of the week and I believe it has helped me to lose weight and become better fit.

I am a motivational speaker; I go to schools and colleges and talk about my abilities and the abilities of others. I also lobby in New York and Washington against the “r word” and bullying. I recently have become an Ambassador for the National Down Syndrome Society.

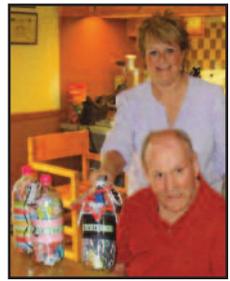
I was a 2011 Special Olympic World Game athlete and traveled to Athens, Greece to compete.

The CSS program has helped me in many ways; it has given me the confidence and independence to do all of these things. It has given me transportation to get to all of these places. I believe I would have been sitting home if not for this program. I am convinced I will live on my own in the future. I guess that I will have to set more goals for myself because with a CSS plan you can do that. I love planning my life the way I want it to be. ■



Speaking at the Roxboro Road Middle School

## Care Jugs for Soldiers



What started out as a project idea from a Pinterest post turned into an all-out effort to support American troops overseas, spearheaded by a North Country Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA).

Anne Martin, a direct support professional at the 57 Haymeadow IRA, shared the Pinterest idea, which consisted of cutting the side of a two-liter bottle, filling it with various items and decorating it to make a care package. With some teamwork and brainstorming, this idea turned into “Care Jugs for Soldiers”.

The first step was to collect items small enough to fit in the bottle that would be useful to the soldiers; items included toiletries, snacks, candy, pens and pencils. For that, they enlisted the community’s help. Collection boxes for items were put out at various locations on the Sunmount Developmental Center campus as well as at businesses and community residences throughout the villages of Tupper Lake and Saranac Lake.

Each week, DSPs and individuals would gather the items donated in the boxes. Once enough items were collected, it was on to the next step—crafting the care packages.

With a lot of time and creativity, some 90 care jugs were made and will be shipped to soldiers stationed in various places throughout the world.

Care Jugs for Soldiers created positive interaction and relationships, teamwork and a sense of inclusion, while, at the same time, giving back to the community. It shows how all members of a community can work together toward a common goal. ■



*Chef Adrian Gresnigt and caffè worker*

If you're looking for great food and even greater atmosphere on Staten Island, step into Lifestyles Caffé. Nestled next to the College of Staten Island, Lifestyles serves up breakfast, lunch and a warm, friendly welcome from the staff comprised mostly of individuals with intellectual disabilities. The workers are part of Lifestyles for the Disabled, which has been providing services to those with intellectual disabilities for the past two decades.

At the Caffé, program participants are given the opportunity to learn and develop skills within a functioning restaurant. Meals are prepared, from beginning to end, by Lifestyles program participants and oversight is provided by Lifestyles staff. Workers are also involved in cleaning, food preparation, wait service, silverware preparation and food stocking. The Lifestyles Caffé also offers catering services.

44-year-old Scott Pedro is a long-time staff member and the short-order cook



*Scott Pedro*

for the Caffé. Scott gets up in the early hours of the morning to be to

work for the start of his shift. "I get up at 4 a.m. and get here at 6 a.m., set-up the grill, and I'm ready for breakfast at 7," he said, "Clean-up is at 2 p.m." Scott says he enjoys the work and that being employed gives him the ability to live with a roommate in their own apartment. It's not all work and no play for Scott, though. He's a Special Olympian, participating in softball, basketball, and hockey, and he says he likes to hang out in the city with his girlfriend.

38-year-old Francine Lieberman is also on the Caffé staff working the salad bar



*Francine Lieberman*

and food prep. Francine had tried other lifestyle programs, but the Caffé turned out to be the perfect fit for her. She says "it's great" working there. Like Scott, Francine lives in an apartment with a roommate, although she is in between roommates at the moment. She also is a Special Olympian participating in softball, floor hockey and track.

The individuals involved in the program work with experienced hires from the community. Head Chef Adrian Gresnigt has been at Lifestyles for more than five years now. He used to work for large hotels and restaurants and, admittedly, was a little hesitant when he came to Lifestyles Caffé, but that doubt quickly went away. "I get a lot of satisfaction that we can help them (the Caffé workers)



*Lunch rush at the Lifestyles Caffé*

bring a little more individuality to their lives," Gresnigt said.

No one is prouder of the work at the Caffé than Lifestyles Executive Director Richard



*Executive Director Richard Salinardi*

Salinardi, who says working in any one of the Lifestyles programs is not only a chance for people with intellectual disabilities to be able to plan their own lives, but an esteem-building experience as well. "Every time we teach someone to become independent, they have that gift for life."

The Caffé isn't the only program offered by Lifestyles. Among its many other ventures are a horticulture program complete with a greenhouse, building maintenance program, a woodshop and a multimedia center where individuals try their hand at video production, photography, blogging and even broadcast their own radio station online.

The Lifestyles Caffé is open to the public for breakfast and lunch, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. In addition, The Lifestyles Caffé is open for catering jobs and on weekends for special events. ■

# Summer Fun At Camp Wilton



Looking for some summer fun near the Adirondacks? Camp Wilton is the place to be!

Located about 40 minutes north of Albany, Camp Wilton provides individuals with developmental disabilities an opportunity to experience outdoor living and take advantage of an extensive program that includes swimming, arts and crafts, recreation, music and drama, as well as outings to many tourist areas such as Lake George, the Great Escape, and the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. Campers attend one-week sessions where they enjoy sleeping in

cabins, relaxing by campfires, singing, dancing and participating in arts, crafts and dramatic productions.

The camp is staffed by trained counselors who are attentive, creative, and enthusiastic companions for the 70-80 people who attend every week for a five day session during the eight weeks of operation. The majority of the counselors are college students, with many of them pursuing academic degrees in the field of developmental disabilities or similar fields.

Camp Wilton hosts approximately 500 campers every summer. While the registration is closed for this year's run with eight sessions from June 23rd to August 15th, it's never too early to start planning for next year!

For more information about Camp Wilton call 518-581-3029. ■



## Meet Shirley

When Shirley Suiter, of Utica, first toured Camp Wilton almost 50 years ago, little did she know that attending Camp Wilton would become an annual tradition that would last throughout her lifetime.

Shirley is one of a few people who have attended Camp

Wilton in Wilton, NY every year since it opened in 1966.

Shirley, who turns 69 this year, was quick to talk about some of her favorite experiences at Camp Wilton. "I like the sleepover at the recreation hall, sitting around the campfire and making s'mores and the big dance under the tent outside on Thursday nights," she said. "The counselors are great people; they are concerned about you and they help you. Plus, they make it fun by dressing up every day, making cheers for us, having a carnival or haunted house. It's a great time."

Shirley can name each of the Camp Wilton directors since 1966 and talks about many friends she has made

over the years. She even talks about first meeting one of her present staff members while he was a student counselor there. "Camp Wilton is an important part of my life," said Shirley. "I just never thought about NOT going."

When Shirley is not at Camp Wilton, she participates in golf and bowling events for Special Olympics. Last year, she brought home a gold medal for golf. She recently retired from her position as receptionist at the Oneida



County Historical Society where she assisted in setting up parties and meetings at the site for 12 years. Shirley now volunteers three days each week at the North Utica Senior Center and was named Volunteer of the Year in 2013. She is affectionately known as the queen of the Utica home where she lives with two friends. ■