



THANK YOU, DSPS!

CONGRATULATIONS,  
ANNIE SMITH!

TEAM RUSSELL!

# THE EEDA READER



## A MESSAGE FROM EEDA'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Direct Support Professionals are the foundation of every human service organization supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. EEDA DSPs are not only the foundation, but also the walls, ceiling, siding, and roof of our organization! They are the very contributors to the warm family atmosphere that exists here today. DSPs provide compassionate, skilled care and support while helping others celebrate life's events and navigate its obstacles. I have learned EEDA DSPs have the amazing ability to focus on the needs of others even though they may be experiencing great challenges of their own. This past year particularly, our DSPs have worked tirelessly to ensure our folks were okay and taken care of. EEDA's core staff provided a lot of overtime, learned how to work double shifts in PPE, and normalized an unstable time in the lives of many people. To express gratitude and appreciation is vital. DSPs make simple and beautiful things happen every day. During Direct Support Recognition Week, we highlight the talents, dedication, and work of our DSPs and thank them for the amazing job they do. They make a difference in someone's life everyday.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Meyer Fertal". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lisa Meyer Fertal, CEO

## A MESSAGE FROM EEDA'S BOARD PRESIDENT



*Let us celebrate the Direct Support Professional:*

A DSP, when focused on caring for a vulnerable individual is a sight that cannot help warm the heart of the beholder. That act of caring is a blessing both for the observer who witnesses it and the recipient of that care and is emblematic of the professional who provides the service. The DSP can then experience the joy that only comes when service to another is central to the task. So let us celebrate the DSPs who work at EEDA. When the individuals served by our agency prosper and gain happiness through their efforts, the DSPs are worthy beyond what words can express. Our thanks for all they do!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fredric Weinbaum". The signature is cursive and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Dr. Fredric Weinbaum, President of the EEDA Board of Directors

T O W N O F R I V E R H E A D

# Office of the Supervisor

## PROCLAMATION

### DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS RECOGNITION WEEK SEPTEMBER 12 - 18, 2021

*Whereas, it is both fitting and proper, the Supervisor of the Town of Riverhead, the entire Town Board and all citizens of the Town of Riverhead join East End Disability Associates, Inc. in honoring those who have gone above and beyond; and*

*Whereas, Direct Support Professionals provide essential support to help keep individuals with disabilities connected to their family and community, to live meaningful, successful lives, and to avoid costly institutional care; and*

*Whereas, Direct Support Professionals, (support workers, direct care workers, personal assistants, personal attendants, in-home support workers and paraprofessionals) are the primary providers of publicly funded, long-term support and services for millions of individuals with mental health issues and disabilities; and*

*Whereas, Direct Support Professionals are vital to the life experiences of many people with disabilities in the Town of Riverhead and are often the difference between community participation and isolation; and*

*Whereas, Direct Support Professionals must build a close, trusting relationship with individuals and assist with their most intimate needs on a daily basis; they provide a broad range of services, including preparation of meals, help with medications, personal hygiene, mobility, transportation and general daily assistance; and*

*Whereas, the work of Direct Support Professionals is essential to allow individuals with mental health issues and disabilities to live successfully as part of their communities, and also enables these individuals and their families to avoid extended, costly institutional care; and*

*Furthermore, Direct Support Professional Week is an opportunity to recognize the important work of those who ensure inclusive environments with equal access to all; and*

*Let it be known, the Town of Riverhead recognizes the vital role that dedicated Direct Support Professionals play in enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities. We extend our appreciation for their contributions that help thousands overcome challenges and help them reach their full potential; and*

*Now therefore, be it proclaimed, that I, Yvette M. Aguiar, Supervisor of the Town of Riverhead, together with the entire Town Board, do hereby proclaim the week of September 12-18, 2021 as **Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week** in the Town of Riverhead, and urge all residents to sustain public knowledge of these individuals who contribute to making a quality community life for those with disabilities.*

Proclaimed, this 8<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2021.



**TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
Timothy Hubbard  
Catherine Kent  
Frank Beyrodt  
Kenneth Rothwell



*Yvette M. Aguiar*  
YVETTE M. AGUIAR  
TOWN SUPERVISOR

*In witness thereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the Town of Riverhead to be affixed this 8th day of September, in the Year of Our Lord, Two Thousand and Twenty-One.*

# THANK YOU, RUSSELL STREET STAFF!

The Russell Street IRA was EEDA's first residence and opened March 22, 2002, making a new home for Andy, Mikey, Richard, Ricky, and Jarrett. Shortly after the house opened, the guys were featured in the film *Use your Words*, which debuted at the Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center. The night of the showing, the Russell Street IRA guys and staff arrived in a white limousine and stepped onto the red carpet that led into the theater. Jim Martinsen and I stood on the sidewalk watching the scene unfold, realizing this event was beyond our wildest dreams. The film was created by a documentary film student who was interested in capturing normal life in a group home. She met with the guys who lived at the IRA, interviewed their parents, and spoke with the staff working at the IRA. It is a remarkable memorial of life at Russell Street. You can access the film here: [eed-a.org/about](http://eed-a.org/about).

Over the years, new members to Russell Street arrived. We added Mike (Mo), Brad, and Xo to the mix. Jarrett transitioned to another agency and sadly, Ricky passed away. We miss them both.

I think about the many staff members who have supported these individuals over the years. Staff come and go, some stay for years, some for weeks, and some leave and then return. Regardless of time spent, every staff who works at Russell Street gives in some way. Their time and contributions are remembered and many are missed. The Russell Street IRA is unique because the people who live there either have limited communication or don't speak at all. Staff working there must have a keen understanding of non-verbal cues and be able to communicate in ways that make sense to the individuals. The staff members communicate well with each other, regularly helping one another with an accident, incident, or just about anything that needs to be done.

We have had many wonderful, stable years at the Russell Street IRA, and we have had some difficult times too. The past two years have been challenging. This IRA is experiencing DSP staff vacancies, management changes, and the challenges of living through a pandemic. To the outsider, and sometimes the insider, it looked like a mess. And sometimes it was, but you could always depend on the DSP staff. They keep coming to work and doing what needs to be done, supporting the guys, and caring about them. The DSP staff have supported these individuals in the hospital through illness, traveled on vacations to Winter Clove, and make every holiday and birthday special.

As we celebrated Direct Support Professional Recognition Week, the Russell Street families showed their appreciation by sending a week of breakfasts and dinners and purchased sweatshirts with a personalized Russell Team logo. Andy, Mikey, Mo, Brad, Xo and Richard's lives are richer because of the amazing DSPs who work at their house. We recognize the following DSPs in the Russell Street dream team on the next page (Please forgive us if we forgot anyone!).

— Lisa Meyer Fertal

# THE RUSSELL TEAM



Davonte Mayes  
*ARM*  
Started 2021



Kim Flood  
*Sr. DSP*  
Started 2018



Andre Alexandre  
*Sr. DSP*  
Started 2013



Leneair Smith  
*DSP*  
Started 2021



Charles Elsbree  
*DSP*  
Started 2010



Dequan Clairborne  
*DSP*  
Started 2017



Datwon Spuill  
*DSP*  
Started 2012



Sherese Johnson  
*DSP*  
Started 2020



Sharon Carrie  
Manuel  
*DSP*  
Started 2002



Brian  
Rodriguez  
*DSP*  
Started 2021



Tyrell Sims  
*DSP*  
Started 2017



Florence Biot  
*DSP*  
Started 2015



Josh Phoenix  
*DSP*  
Started 2018



Brandon Rodriguez  
*DSP*  
Started 2018



Danielle Hanley  
*DSP*  
Started 2016



Tim Cole  
*DSP*  
Started 2020



Nikayla James  
*DSP*  
Started 2018



Amanda Kwasna  
*DSP*  
Started 2015

# THANK YOU, RUSSELL TEAM!



# MAKING A HOUSE A HOME

The Russell Street IRA, like all of EEDA's residences, has had a difficult year during the pandemic. Russell Street has a core staff of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and several new staff members dedicated to caring for the individuals who reside at the IRA. COVID-19 brought great challenges to group home living, chronic short staffing levels, lack of community integration, the discontinuation of Day Services and the limiting of family visits in or out of the home. Our guys had to rely on the DSP staff for all of their needs physically and emotionally.

COVID-19 directly affected every IRA at EEDA, but Russell Street was hit particularly hard with the loss of longtime resident Ricky Massarek in the early stages of the pandemic. At the start of the Christmas holiday, Andy was hospitalized and critically ill with COVID-19 for two weeks, and during those two weeks, following our COVID-19 Emergency Protocols, EEDA Administration decided to lockdown the IRA with five residents and six staff for the recommended quarantine period. While in lockdown, the staff did heroic work as they risked their own health to provide for the safe recovery of all the Russell Street guys. Everyone at EEDA is forever grateful for this true show of selflessness by the DSP staff.

However, COVID also brought out the best in our staff and at Russell Street, and we saw some amazing things going on. With the guys being home most of the time, staff were not under pressure of getting everyone up and out to Day Program five days a week, the pace was more relaxed, and the staff had more time to plan and prepare healthy meals, and that combined with increased activities around the house led to the surprising result of the guys losing a few pounds. This increase in activity came in the form of fun—the guys have been enjoying playing basketball in the driveway, using the trampoline in the backyard, and swimming in the pool. Families of residents can now come to enjoy the pool too when spending time with their loved ones during Sunday swim sessions. The residents also love spending time in the new sensory room upstairs. The guys love the basketball hoop, beanbag chairs, carnival mirror, bubbles, and Nintendo Wii.

The staff at Russell Street say there's a lot to love about the people they support. Like how much fun their imaginative mindset is during the holidays, the friendly greeting staff receive every day when they come on shift, or the harmless pranks the guys play on each other.

The residents of Russell Street might not be big talkers, but they have big personalities. The warmth and affection staff feel can be seen on their faces when talking about the people they support. The DSP's who work at Russell Street are a team, unified by their compassion for the guys, and we're so grateful for the important work they do every day.

— John Hatton

# WITH THANKS

I am quietly heroic in ways this world cannot see  
Boastful only of your success we together celebrate  
You've drawn a picture of yourself with your family  
Beneath each person you've spelled their name.  
You've made a paper necklace cut in bright colors  
It dangles from your neck, proudly displayed  
I'd rather wear the jewelry we design together  
Than the most popular fashions of the day.  
You and I inhabit a space no one else can see  
We speak a language no one hears but us  
As long as one person can understand me  
I am not alone in the universe.  
I see you've added a figure to your family  
Beneath it you've written the letters D S P.

**John Aicher, Esq., EEDA Board of Directors**



# DSP WEEK AT DAY HAB



Riverhead Day Hab celebrated DSP Recognition Week with goodies, new RHDH tee shirts, and quality time with the guys. Thank you to all of our day program DSPs—we appreciate you!

# NYAII DSP AWARD WINNER, ANNIE SMITH

***EEDA is proud to announce that Annie Smith is a recipient of the 2021 New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation DSP Award for the Long Island Region! Congratulations, Annie!***

## **Annie Smith, DSP/Med Tech**

Annie started out like a lot of people in our industry—as a part-time DSP who always had an interest in helping people and wanted to see what it was like to support people with disabilities. She came to EEDA in August 2020 as a part-time DSP in our Residential program. Annie worked at several IRAs and began forming relationships with different individuals and staff. As she spent more time with “the guys,” she found herself drawn to the work and decided to leave her other job behind and join the EEDA team full time.

In September 2020, Annie settled into a full-time shift at one of EEDA’s Day Habilitation programs where she had the opportunity to meet even more of the guys. She enjoyed the experience of working in Day Hab, taking small groups of individuals into the community to parks, beaches, events, and volunteer activities. Annie began to feel true satisfaction and value in her work, and said that she woke up in the mornings excited to go to work and felt that her job didn’t just feel like a job.

After two months working at Day Hab, a Med Tech DSP position became available at the agency—Annie applied and was promoted. As a Med Tech DSP, Annie was able to spend more one-to-one time with the individuals as she provided transportation and assisted on medical appointments. Her position requires a close working relationship with the IRA nurse, the IRA manager, and all the medical providers and families of the individuals in her caseload. Annie does her job professionally and with a passion for the well-being of her guys.



During COVID, Annie, like so many DSPs, just kept coming to work. She put her personal health on the line daily, but she says that although she was nervous like everyone else, she felt that by following the agency’s COVID-19 protocols she was protecting herself from any unnecessary risk of contracting the virus.

Annie says that working at EEDA has given her an opportunity for personal and professional growth. She stated that even during COVID, she never felt alone. She sees herself remaining in this field and growing with the company. Like so many other wonderful, talented DSPs, Annie is establishing lifelong relationships with the people she supports, keeping them healthy, and enriching their lives. EEDA is proud to nominate Annie Smith to be recognized by the NY Alliance as a DSP who embodies the NADSP Code of Ethics every day.

# NYAII DSP NOMINEE, JAYDA BARROW

## Jayda Barrow, DSP

Direct support professionals play an outstanding role in the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities at EEDA. While all direct support professionals are equally important and special, we would like to shine a light on one of EEDA's star DSPs, Jayda Barrow. And what a star she is!



Jayda has been with EEDA for eleven months, and in that time she has exhibited many qualities that make her a star DSP. Jayda's willingness to learn and try new things is one of the many attributes that makes her an exceptional DSP. Jayda started her position during the pandemic, which was a confusing and tumultuous time to start any job. Starting a new job with its many new challenges is never easy, but COVID-19 literally changed everything. Jayda had to learn how to follow the agency's COVID-19 protocols to protect the health and safety of the individuals and staff while she was also learning the many job responsibilities of a DSP. She approached these challenges with ease and enthusiasm.

Jayda is a fast and effective learner. She is also very creative and comes up with ideas for activities and finds solutions to problems on a daily basis. Whether she is working hands-on with the individuals to support them with activities or outings, or brainstorming creative ideas or staff grouping suggestions, she is always looking for ways to improve the lives of the people around her.

Jayda shows up to work every day with a positive and an enthusiastic attitude, which makes her a great influence for everyone. She is prepared to make a difference from the time she opens the door until the time she leaves. Jayda's positive attitude, paired with her compassion, makes her an exemplary DSP. It's clear she considers her role as a DSP more than just a job. The compassion Jayda exhibits for the individuals she supports and her co-workers is what makes her really shine. Whether it's just listening to someone or assisting in a group project, Jayda is a wonderful DSP.

During the heart of the pandemic, Jayda supported people in one of our IRAs. When residents in that house tested positive for COVID-19, Jayda followed EEDA's COVID-19 safety policy and cared for the residents in her house. She also played a critical role in welcoming two individuals who moved into the house while she was there, helping them to feel at home. When residents were quarantined in their house, Jayda made sure their days were filled with fun activities. She quickly became one of our most dependable DSPs.

All of Jayda Barrow's exemplary qualities make EEDA proud to nominate her to be recognized by the NY Alliance for her efforts of compassion and creativity as a DSP. We know Jayda is proud of the work she does, the person she is, and the difference she makes. Congratulations Jayda, we appreciate you, and thank you for all that you do!

## NYAII DSP NOMINEE DOROTHY



Dorothy Gay has worked with Karen for about four years. Dorothy is very warm and caring and gives all of her heart when working with Karen. Throughout the years, Karen has been in and out of the hospital and each time Dorothy makes a point to visit Karen during her hospital stay. Karen can always count on Dorothy showing up to help her feel secure, and Karen looks forward to the special gifts Dorothy brings with her to cheer her up.

Karen's mother passed away a few years ago. Dorothy was at Karen's side during her mom's funeral to support Karen during this very difficult time. Karen's stepdad, who Karen was very close to, passed away last year and again, Karen knew that Dorothy would be there for her and that Karen could lean on her for the much needed emotional support.

Dorothy has included Karen in her family gatherings for special occasions and has made her feel like she is part of her family. During the pandemic, when Karen was not allowed to go out and Dorothy was not allowed to see Karen face to face, on many occasions Dorothy would make Karen dinner and drop it off on her doorstep just to ensure Karen had hot home cooked meals. Dorothy did many of these things on her own time.

Dorothy stated that she really enjoys being with Karen, and her main goal is to make a positive difference in Karen's life. When I asked Karen if she had anything else she would like to add she said, "She understands people like me."

Karen and Dorothy have built such a great bond, and this is the true meaning of being a DSP. It is not about the paycheck—it is about building relationships and giving support when and where it is needed. This is what Dorothy does for Karen and more.

# THANK YOU DSPs!

# ANNUAL PICNIC



Staff from Administration, Fiscal Intermediary, and the Crisis Team all pulled together to run this year's annual picnic. It's been two difficult years since EEDA gathered together as a family, and it felt amazing to be reunited under the pavilion at Indian Island Park. Thank you to everyone who helped make this day so memorable.



## THANK YOU, CATHERINE!

We having been working with Catherine Cook and I wanted to say how amazing she is. Our son Ryan absolutely loves her. You should see his face light up when she walks into the room. She is so caring toward Ryan (and the rest of our family as well). We are beyond lucky to have her as part of our son's life.

— Dan Mangan

## THANK YOU, DINA AND DANIELLE!

I'm writing this letter on behalf of my two staff workers, Dina and Danielle DelGiorno. They are both caring and competent and always meet Derek's needs. They are both continuing to work on bringing Derek into the community to work on his social and behavioral goals. While at home with Derek, they both continue to help him with life and daily living skills, which has had a major impact in his life. Derek could not have two better people in his life.

— John & Debbie Gatta

## THANK, YOU EMILY!

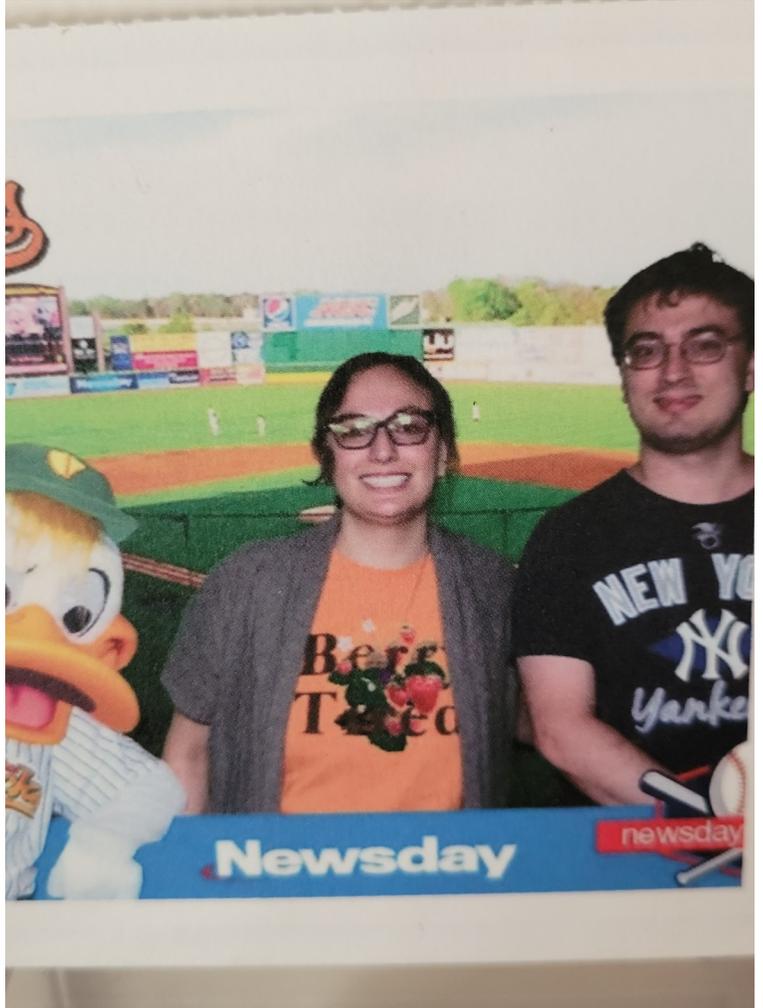
Here are a few photos of Emily Hoenschied with Kati Katsaros. Emily is a great DSP and has enriched Kati's life enormously in many different ways.

— Elise Morris



## THANK YOU, VALERIE!

Valerie is the absolute best DSP Jonathan could ever have hoped for. During the COVID-19 lockdown, she was with him daily. Valerie bought a board game, Big Bang Trivia, based on one of Jonathan's favorite television shows, which she introduced him to, and they played almost daily. Then, on Valentine's Day 2021, she surprised Jonathan with the ultimate gift, she was able to secure him an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine at Suffolk County Community College when appointments were so hard to get. This act of kindness just lifted his spirits to the highest level that I had seen in months. Valerie is frequently taking Jon on excursions and into the community and teaching him life lessons while they are out. Pictured is Valerie and Jonathan at a LI Ducks game. Thank you Val from all of us!!!



— Diane W Narr

## THANK YOU, COURTNEY!



Jon Ingria, Mariann Ingria, and Courtney Cappas. Jon's Mom says that Courtney has been a huge support to Jon and his family, especially during the first wave of the pandemic. She describes Courtney as thoughtful, patient, and kind, and thanks her for dedicating so much of her time to help Jon.

— Mariann Ingria

# THANK YOU, MICHAEL!

Anthony's DSP, Michael Klotz, has been working with Anthony for four years now. He was the best thing to happen to Anthony. Michael goes beyond helping Anthony. They have fun doing the life skills. They have fun going to the Ducks games, walks, and dining out adventures.

Anthony is extremely happy with Michael. They have a great bond.

Michael helps Anthony a lot, and Anthony loves to have his time with Michael. They tell jokes while on their adventures. Michael is amazing with Anthony. We are so glad to have him.

Thank you so much Michael for all your hard work with Anthony.

— Robin Pagano

# THANK YOU, ALEX!



We would like to recognize Michael's support staff, Alex Davila. Although we have only known Alex for a short time, he has become part of our family. Michael was looking for someone around his age so he can have a "friend" to do things with. Alex has gone above and beyond finding fun physical activities for Michael to do. He encourages him to be more active and lead a healthier lifestyle. He has assisted him with keeping his room tidy and shopping for groceries amongst many other tasks in a short amount of time. He is always making sure Michael is safe and happy and keeps great lines of communication open with us. He makes Michael feel like he has a friendship rather than a staff/client relationship. I hope Alex continues to work with Michael for a long time. He is truly a reliable and dedicated East End staff.

— The Antignano Family

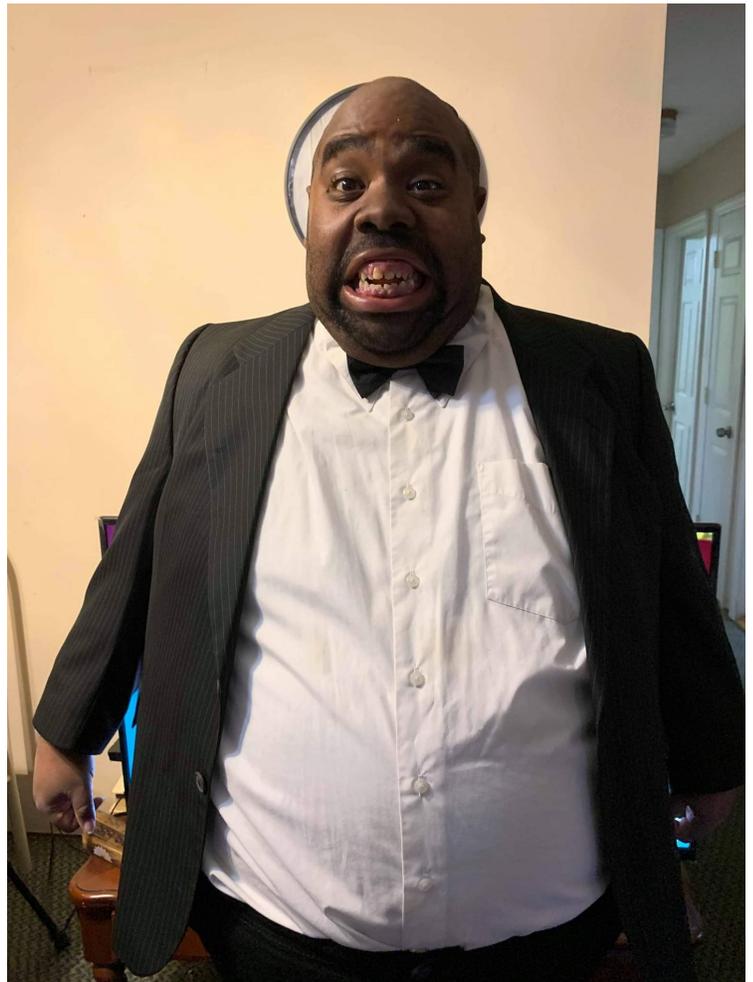
## THANK YOU, MARISOL!

Marisol Vargas has been with EEDA since 2016. During her time with EEDA, she has dedicated her skills, sincerity, and patience to the individuals she works with. She aids in helping people to maintain their independence in the community. For instance, she helped Richard discover new recipes to make at home. The most interesting recipe was "Duck." This is a great example of her dedication, compassion, and the respect she has for the individuals she supports.



## THANK YOU, KEVIN!

Kevin Leonard has been with EEDA since 2019. During his time at EEDA, Kevin has showed great dedication and compassion to the individuals we serve. Kevin is always thinking of ways to motivate our individuals to succeed in their long and short term goals. Kevin's genuineness and sincerity led him to ask Steffon to be the best man at his wedding and Steffon gladly accepted. Each day Kevin strives to learn the individual's strengths and weaknesses to make them a better person. Overall, Kevin continues to have a positive attitude that helps us build a more uplifting and productive work environment.



# DSP WEEK HAPPENINGS

Mister Softee made a special appearance at Riverhead Day Hab and Calverton Day Hab to give out free ice cream in honor of DSP Recognition Week.



# DSP WEEK AT HENRY LEWIS LANE



DSP staff at the Henry Lewis Lane IRA in Jamesport were treated by their house manager to some cozy slippers to go with their new EEDA swag. Staff also received a generous gift from one of the family's they support!





*Creating Opportunities for Happy Lives*



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