

Master of Ceremonies

Frank Latham

Welcome

Elaine Buchsbaum, Chair

N.J. Council on Developmental Disabilities

Keynote

Sheila Y. Oliver

Assembly Speaker

Lunch



Opening Remarks

Alison Lozano

Executive Director

Presentation of Awards

Hazeline Pilgrim & Andrew McGeady

Council Members

Awardees

Assemblyman Joseph Cryan

Bill Byrne

Jane Horowitz

Beverly Roberts

Rose Williams

Jim Rhor, Bagel Street Grill

Paul Grzella, My Central Jersey.com

Karen O'Brien

Christine Gilbert & Diane Mueller

Tim Cotov & David Gross

Katherine Siso

Gia Calabrese & Megan Earl

Donna Eckman & Maryann Bate

Exceptional Policymaker Award Assemblyman Joseph Cryan

Assemblyman Cryan has been a vigilant advocate for disability services and programs, even in times of great economic difficulty. Assemblyman Cryan consistently protects funding for programs that are crucial to the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities; he works to ensure that families on the waiting list for community-based housing have hope for the future; he fights efforts to include Medicaid co-pays in any budget; and he has sponsored legislation to require an annual increase in contracts to non-profit community service providers.

Assemblyman Cryan has championed a number of bills to expand and support community inclusion. As the prime sponsor of the bill to require the Department of Human Services to develop a plan to move individuals with disabilities out of institutions, Assemblyman Cryan's leadership and vision laid the groundwork for the creation of New Jersey's Path to Progress plan. As a direct result, hundreds of adults with developmental disabilities who wished to leave state institutions have done so, and today are living in communities throughout New Jersey. Assemblyman Cryan was also the prime sponsor of a bill to establish a registry of offenders who have abused or neglected individuals with developmental disabilities within DHS.

Assemblyman Cryan's sense of justice and compassion for families of children in special education is evident in several areas. He has worked closely with advocates of children in the special education system whose may need to go to court to protect their child's educational rights. His "Burden of Proof" ensures that parents have a level playing field in order to secure appropriate services for their children. He has clearly demonstrated his willingness to take risks to help vulnerable families. He also sponsored legislation to guarantee out-of-state programs for New Jersey children with disabilities meet basic criteria.

As Chairman of the Assembly Education Committee, Assemblyman Cryan called a special hearing to receive testimony from parents concerned about New Jersey Department of Education's efforts to sidestep requirements of federal law through an expanded role for the Executive County Superintendent. His inquiry prompted the Department to meet with advocates, clarify language and ultimately, issue a memo instructing districts to follow federal law. Another bill championed by Assemblyman Cryan directed the Department of Education to provide a booklet with information about adult disability services for parents of special education students and to designate staff to act as parent liaisons.

Assemblyman Cryan is well deserving of the Exceptional Policy Maker Award for his courage, leadership, and conviction for the rights of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Colleen Fraser Self-Advocate Award Bill Byrne

For over 27 years Bill Byrne has influenced and inspired generations of self-advocates – always taking the time to mentor and share his experience and passion for self-advocacy work. Bill has been a leader at both the Arc of New Jersey and Morris County’s Unity Club since their inception.

Bill has served as the Region 7 Representative for the national organization, Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE), serving as a member of the by-law committee. He developed self-advocacy contacts around the country and has kept them aware that self-advocacy is alive and well in New Jersey.

He has served as the local President of New Jersey United Self-Advocates (NJUSA), board member of The Arc of New Jersey, a member of the Morristown Rent Leveling Committee, Founder and past President of Unity Club Self-Advocacy group (Arc Morris) and Council 1 Chairperson of the New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network. Under Bill’s leadership Council 1 created sensitivity training for the medical profession, called “I’m the Patient and A Person.” This training has been provided to first year medical students at UMDNJ’s Robert Wood Johnson Medical School for several years.

Bill is a Partners in Policymaking (PIP) graduate. His valuable experience as a PIP graduate has provided him with the skills to meet with legislators, participate in action alerts, and to speak on behalf of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Bill goes above and beyond speaking up for himself and, as a result, blazes the trail for others to follow. He is driven to advocate to make sure things are better for his niece with a disability so she will have access to services and an equal chance at a full and productive life.

Although Bill is involved with the current R Word campaign, Bill began his own R Word campaign 20 years ago.

Mr. Byrne takes his responsibility as a self-advocate seriously and is dedicated to making a difference for himself and others with developmental disabilities.

Elizabeth Boggs Advocacy Award Jane Horowitz

Jane Horowitz is a parent who worked tirelessly to ensure that her daughter has the supports needed to succeed. As Executive Director of the Spina Bifida Resource Network for over 20 years, Jane worked diligently to ensure that families received the assistance and supports necessary to care for their family member with spina bifida.

As President of the Family Support Coalition of New Jersey, Jane advocated for families caring at home with a range of developmental disabilities. Her dual perspective of professional/parent was invaluable in helping to shape the advocacy efforts of the Coalition, which is made up of family members and Family Support Service providers.

Across roles, Jane has brought a deep understanding of the challenges in both receiving and providing services, and a fierce conviction that the system could and should do better in serving individuals with disabilities and their families.

Jane's insight to details helps her to see the potential unintended consequences of policy decisions. One example is Jane's reaction to the Division of Developmental Disabilities shift from a waiting list for residential services to a waiting list for waiver services. Jane immediately understood parents who did not believe they would ever need out-of-home residential placement and had never asked to be put on the residential waiting list, would now find themselves at the bottom of the waiting list for waiver services. This includes families who had been eligible for DDD services for years, but are now aging caregivers in critical need of exactly the kind of services the waiver could provide. In meeting after meeting Jane has raised this concern. She knows there are no easy solutions to the problem; however, she recognizes the difficult predicament and potential for crisis these families are currently facing making this an issue that cannot be ignored.

Jane demonstrates openness to other points of view, and a commitment to respectful dialogue and unwavering belief in the ideal of full community inclusion for people with disabilities.

Lifetime Achievement Award Beverly Roberts

Beverly Roberts has worked tirelessly for over 20 years to effect significant and lasting systems change in the area of health care for people with developmental disabilities. She has also never forgotten the individuals and families who are directly impacted by these systems and has strived to be an exceptional resource for people seeking information on health and medical care services, the means to accessible pharmaceuticals, and the changes in government regulations that affect the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

Ms. Roberts plans and organizes an annual conference on health and medical issues of special interest to people with developmental disabilities. The conference is outstanding and is attended by more than 400 policy makers, service providers and self-advocates. She has held seminars around the state to educate consumers about changes in health care regulations which may impact their medical care. She is thoughtful in answering individuals' questions. Some of the problems Bev tackles for consumers are complex, requiring a great deal of advocacy, patience and collaboration to reach a successful outcome.

Ms. Roberts served on numerous taskforces and committees organized to address issues ranging from aging, mental health, dental care, children's services and sexuality. She has participated in roundtable discussions on federal health care policy at the request of The Arc of the United States and member of Congress. Ms. Roberts has testified numerous times before the New Jersey Senate and Assembly, most recently in opposition to Medicaid co-pays. Her testimony, along with her mobilization of grassroots advocacy, resulted in Medicaid co-pays being removed from the proposed State budget for the past three years.

Several years ago Ms. Roberts became very concerned about the poor gynecological care received by women with developmental disabilities. Ms. Roberts obtained grant funding to create a program called "Let Talk About Health: What every woman should know." The program has expanded to include a series of programs that provide information on diabetes, family health histories, and cancer of the breast, prostate and colon for people with developmental disabilities. People with developmental disabilities are living healthier lives and are receiving the critical health screenings they need because of Ms. Roberts educational programs.

Distinguished DD Systems Change Award Rose Williams

Rose A. Williams is the Social Justice Administrator for the New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women (NJCBW). The NJCBW in Trenton, New Jersey is a statewide coalition of 29 domestic violence programs and individuals with a collective mission to end violence in the lives of women. Services of the NJCBW include the following: community education and training, advocacy, technical assistance related to domestic violence and diversity issues.

As Social Justice Administrator Ms. Williams is responsible for technical assistance to member programs and community organizations statewide related to enhancing services to underserved populations. These populations include but are not limited to diverse communities of color and people with disabilities. She coordinates projects and related diversity, cultural competency and disability training workshops to assist domestic violence programs and community organizations in areas of program development, community education and staff development.

Ms. Williams conducted a series of roundtable discussions related to domestic violence and disability which informed the Coalition's understanding of the gaps in services to abused women with disabilities. Ultimately, these discussions lead to early collaborations with the disability community resulting in three regional cross trainings on domestic violence and disability, Stop the Violence Break the Silence, which brought domestic violence, sexual violence and disability advocates together in June 2004.

Ms. Williams, representing NJCBW worked in cooperation with Department of Human Services, Division on Disability and Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, New Jersey Coalition on Women with Disability and New Jersey Coalition on Sexual Assault to organize and convene the Unheard Voice: Services for Women with Disabilities conference September 29, 2004 the first conference in New Jersey solely dedicated to domestic and sexual violence and women with disabilities.

January 2007 Ms. Williams was instrumental in completing the NJCBW application for the Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women 2007 Education, Training and Enhanced Services to End Violence and Abuse of Women with Disabilities Grant by successfully partnering with the ARC of New Jersey, the Mental Health Association in New Jersey and New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault. The \$750,000 grant has enabled NJCBW partners to conduct a two-county wide pilot project to conduct a needs assessment of consumers, survivors, staff and management of both victim service and disability agencies in Atlantic and Morris counties related to developmental disability and mental illness.

Access Above and Beyond Award Bagel Street Grill

Bagel Street Grill is a community gathering center for Plainsboro Township. During the early mornings Monday thru Friday and all day on Saturday and Sunday there is usually standing room only. Bagel Street's customers reflect the diversity of the Plainsboro community. It is a mix of youth, seniors, men, women, families and people with disabilities. Bagel Street's philosophy of community inclusion is an everyday way of doing business.

Bagel Street is physically accessible. If something is not reachable in the refrigerator or back of counters, the sales staff is there to assist, always with timeliness, patience and grace. No matter how busy, the Bagel Street staff quietly and patiently assists customers with reading menus, determining if they have enough money, and counting change. Assistance is provided with dignity for all customers providing seamless interaction across age, race, ethnicity and disability which is infectious for all customers.

Bagel Street is proud of their approach to community because it makes a real impact in the daily lives of their customers with disabilities. This support emanates from throughout the organization beginning with the owner, Jim Rhor, practiced by the sales staff, chefs and bakers.

Multi-Media Award My Central Jersey.com

MyCentralJersey.com is the website for the Home News and Courier News. This website incorporates the news from the newspapers, as well as includes interesting web tools that engage people with developmental disabilities.

The site includes a bulletin board for people to communicate about programs and services to the disability community. It is user friendly and welcomes people with developmental and other disabilities to participate in all aspects of its online community.

MyCentralJersey.com offers features about people in the community who are working to create better access for all. The website does a good job covering local issues, which helps people with developmental disabilities become more engaged in the community. People can comment directly to the reporter, the editor and the community at-large via an interactive web portal.

In today's times web-based communities are growing quickly. These communities pull together people from all backgrounds and experiences. They have redefined community inclusion by starting from a place where barriers and discrimination are not challenges to overcome; they often don't exist to begin with.

Paul Grzella obviously understands that the best way to promote inclusive communities is to build them from the ground up with the broadest possible access and resources for all its members. MyCentralJersey.com is setting the example of how the new media can respond to all its consumers—those with or without disabilities.

Web based media sources allow people with developmental and other disabilities to fully participate in their online communities. Hopefully that example will serve to educate and influence more traditional communities throughout the state.

Fellowship in Inclusive Education Awards

Karen O' Brien

New Egypt Primary School, Plumsted Township School District

Exemplary Practice: Inclusive – Multi-Sensory Learning Experiences

Karen O'Brien is an Occupational Therapist who uses her professional practices to support reading skills development in all children in an inclusive preschool environment.

Occupational Therapists understand the importance of fine motor, visual motor, coordination, and sensory skills to learning how to hold a pencil and form letters. Karen O'Brien shared her expertise with her principal and suggested a program to promote the development of these critical pre-reading skills.

With the enthusiastic support of her principal and the other teachers in the school, Ms. O'Brien has successfully created and implemented a multi-sensory learning program that teaches the concepts and abilities children must acquire to master pre-reading skills. All children participate in these classroom activities, both students who are classified as eligible for special education and those who are not classified.

This wonderful program uses various art mediums along with play, songs, and movement to provide meaningful social opportunities as well as educational gains. In addition to providing the impetus and initial staff training for this initiative, Karen O'Brien also works tirelessly to support and expand the program, spending time each day in every classroom and meeting weekly with teachers helping them use occupational therapy practices and differentiated instruction to promote student success toward reading and writing.

Christine Gilbert
Diane Mueller
Jackson Avenue Elementary School, Hackensack

Exemplary Practice: 3-Tier Inclusion Approach to Promote In-Class Consultation and In-Class Support

Christine Gilbert and Diane Mueller are responsible for initiating a school-wide approach to inclusive practices that encompasses the administrative support and professional development that are keys for successful system change.

These dedicated special education teachers recognized the importance of involving all stakeholders in the planning stages – administrators, general education and special education teachers as well as paraprofessionals. Their commitment to ensuring that there was communication between staff and their respect for the insights and suggestions of all involved, Ms. Gilbert and Ms. Mueller ensured that their plan for promoting inclusion would be embraced by the school community.

These exemplary practices highlight that the following elements are critical to successful school-wide inclusion:

- Regular monthly meetings between administrators, general education teachers and special education teachers to provide an opportunity for ongoing evaluation and refinement of instructional and administrative practices.
- Administrators who actively supported inclusion by allowing teachers the time and opportunity to plan the initial program, and who provide continuing support by allowing teachers time to meet and plan strategies.
- A culture where staff is open to making changes in their classrooms and to differentiating instruction.
- A recognition that differentiated instruction provided through In-Class Consultation, In-Class Support and focused pull-out instruction benefit all students, not just those who are receiving special education services.

Ms. Gilbert and Ms. Mueller have implemented practices that have become a demonstration site for administrators and teachers from many other districts, thus exemplifying the goals of the Fellowship program by sharing their success and expertise with others so it can be duplicated and expanded.

Tim Cotov
David Gross
Long Beach Island Consolidated School District

Exemplary Practice: Fully Inclusive, District-Wide Music and Chorus Program

Tim Cotov and David Gross have used their skills to develop a district-wide music program that includes and values all students.

The district's curriculum provides inclusive music education in all grades beginning in Kindergarten. The available programs include instrumental music lessons and participation in the band, the string ensemble, and the Chorus. There are also inclusive opportunities for music composition using computers in a technology laboratory.

Mr. Cotov and Mr. Gross provide a wonderful variety of instruments for all ages and abilities and provide classroom instruction and web materials about music concepts such as recognizing pitch, rhythm and intervals.

Children also actively participate in numerous performances of song, dance and instruments. The opportunity to participate in school wide activities and exhibit strengths has helped students develop self-esteem, confidence and social skills.

These talented teachers have used their skills in the arts and education to enable students to express themselves and show their strengths and abilities in a fully inclusive setting alongside their peers. This exceptional practice welcomes all students into the learning community and celebrates their strengths and contributions.

Katherine Siso Madison Junior School

Exemplary Practice: K'NEX: Making Connections with Classmates

Katherine Siso is a middle school guidance counselor who has shown great insight and leadership in recognizing the type of supports needed to foster genuine friendships between students with and without disabilities.

She began encouraging meaningful relationships between included students and their typically developing classmates by bringing in a leadership training program for peer mentors. Although these programs shared important information about valuing differences, Ms. Siso was sensitive in recognizing that the students participating in the Peer Connections program were not forming social connections. She then developed a new program that would provide a variety of supports and opportunities for fostering friendships.

Ms. Siso created the K'NEX: Making Connections with Classmates peer mentoring program. The program offers leadership and awareness training to 7th and 8th grade general education students to deepen their understanding of behavioral differences. Ms. Siso also provides social skills development activities to students with Asperger Syndrome and other developmental disabilities.

Ms. Siso's program highlights the importance of extensive collaboration with school teachers and other professionals to support the students in her program. She has consulted with the school behaviorist, school psychologist, and speech-language professional to enrich the program elements for all students. Teachers and paraprofessionals also observe and provide feedback. General education peer mentors meet regularly to share experiences and develop skills.

The program has been a success. Students are making connections in diverse settings, many of which have been the most difficult environments for social relationships, such as the cafeteria, gym class and other group activities. The dedication of Ms. Siso to ensuring that all students have opportunities to connect and to form rewarding and reciprocal friendships is a welcome initiative and is expected to be a model for other schools and districts.

Gia Calabrese
Megan Earl
Cranford High School

Exemplary Practice: Systems Change through Co-Teaching, Curriculum Development and Alternate Assessments

Gia Calabrese is a High School Science Teacher and Megan Earl is a special education teacher. These exemplary educators have collaborated with tremendous success to make College Prep Biology, Chemistry and Geo-Physical Science accessible to all students. Their efforts have led to the school's elimination of "replacement classes."

Ms. Calabrese and Ms. Earl believe firmly in teacher collaboration to promote shared goals and accomplishments for all learners. They effectively implement their educational philosophy in their inclusive practices and have worked together as a team to skillfully diversify instructional methods and develop alternate methods of assessing student progress.

These teachers have recognized that students in both general and special education need diverse ways to master curriculum content and to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and achievements. They emphasize opportunities to engage students in the course material and also work to foster enthusiasm and confidence in their high school students. Significantly, their exemplary teaching practices have benefitted struggling students who are not classified as eligible for special education as well as class members who do have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) under the IDEA and need support.

Ms. Calabrese and Ms. Earl have also opened their classroom to peers and parents for observation and have supported colleagues who have adopted these practices in additional classrooms. These extraordinary teachers enable all learners to capitalize on their strengths and meet high expectations. Ms. Calabrese and Ms. Earl also contribute to the professional development of their peers and have accomplished critical system change as their practices continue to replace segregated programs and expand to reach more classrooms. Gia Calabrese and Megan Earl exemplify the goals of the Fellowship Awards.

Donna Eckman
Maryann Bate
Pemberton Township High School

Exemplary Practice: Circle of Friends

The Circle of Friends is an inclusive after school program at Pemberton High School that focuses on promoting shared activities and meaningful friendships between general education students and students with intellectual and learning disabilities.

Donna Eckman and Maryann Bate facilitate the program. Circle of Friends activities include arts and crafts, holiday gift making, poster contests, board games and cultural activities. They also frequently have presenters on cooking, therapy dogs, reptile rescues, Latin dancing, guided imagery relaxation techniques and other diverse topics. As part of the meetings the students prepare and share a snack.

A key goal of Circle of Friends is to build students' self-esteem, social skills and confidence so that participants will join other school and community groups. To support friendships and social skills, Donna Eckman and Maryann Bate also coach the students in conflict resolution, communication skills, evaluating body language and group dynamics. Ms. Eckman and Ms. Bate also guide the students in learning the importance of valuing differences, kindness and respect.

Circle of Friends promotes social skills in all participants and fosters friendships that extend beyond the meetings to the cafeteria, hallway and other school activities.

Donna Eckman and Maryann Bate have demonstrated that meaningful relationships between students with and without disabilities can be fostered through skill development and opportunities for enjoyable interactions in typical settings.