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Elaine Buchsbaum, *Chair*  
Alison M. Lozano, Ph.D., M.P.A., *Executive Director*

## NJ Council of Developmental Disabilities Honors First Community Builders

Sometimes individual New Jerseyans, organizations and businesses rise above the everyday to do exceptional work for all of us.

The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities believes highlighting that good work will promote more of it and help our state's varied communities thrive. Toward that end the Council has chosen the following as the first recipients of its Community Building Awards.

Senator Richard Codey (West Orange): For his exceptional work over 25 years of public service in championing public policies people with disabilities need to live with dignity, safety, inclusion and self-direction. (Exceptional Policymaker Award)

The Star Ledger (Newark): For consistently reporting and commenting on issues important to people with developmental disabilities and their families, including recent coverage of the state's intractable waiting list for residential services for people with developmental disabilities and ongoing calls to close some of the state's developmental centers. (Multi-media Award)

Barbara Coppens (Cherry Hill): For her leadership role in the state's self-advocacy movement for over 25 years, including frequent visits to people still living in institutions, volunteer work with grass roots advocacy groups such as the Self-Advocacy Project, and many other activities on behalf of people with developmental disabilities and their families. (Colleen Fraser Self-Advocacy Award)

John Kover (Cherry Hill): For his lifetime of personal and systems advocacy, including surviving 40 years in state institutions and using those experiences to advocate for better options for people with developmental disabilities. (Lifetime Achievement Award)

Donna Icovino (Millstone Township): For her work on behalf of people with developmental disabilities and mental illness and their families, including chairing the New Jersey Department of Human Services Dual Diagnosis Task Force, co-authoring a family crisis handbook and teaching others how to advocate for themselves and their families. (Elizabeth Boggs Family Member Advocacy Award)

Seeking Ways Out Together (SWOT) Team (Trenton-based Statewide): For their work in supporting people living in New Jersey's institutions who want to move into the community. The team is comprised of former institution residents who go back to those facilities to help current residents advocate for themselves and make the transition to community life. (Distinguished DD Systems Change Award)

Sandra Bongart/Adorn Beauty Center (Bordentown): For showing how businesses can lead the way to making New Jersey communities open to people with developmental disabilities through an innovative “pet therapy” that helps those with challenging behaviors become more at ease in social situations. (Access Above and Beyond Award)

“We feel it is important to identify and recognize good works in ensuring that New Jersey’s communities are open and accepting of all it’s members,” says Dr. Alison Lozano, executive director of the Council. We are beginning a new annual tradition this year to highlight the best achievements in building inclusive communities. The formal ceremony honoring these outstanding citizen representatives will be held Thursday, April 9.”

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