

AMSTERDAM

Liberty ARC celebrates 15 direct support professionals

Liberty ARC celebrated their third class of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who achieved National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) credentials in August and as part of the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) credentialing pilot program. A total of 15 DSP's at Liberty ARC were recognized for their accomplishment in earning at least one credential.

On hand to help celebrate were Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara, chair of the Assembly Committee for People with Disabilities; Commissioner Willow Baer and Deputy Commissioner of Administration Adrienne Mazeau of New York State's Office for People with Developmental Disabilities; Kathy Brown from NADSP; and representatives from the Arc New York, the Alliance for Inclusion, and the Montgomery County Executive's office.

NADSP is one of the nation's leading DSP associations, promoting excellence in direct support work. As a member of NADSP, Liberty ARC has the opportunity for our direct care staff to earn credentials through the NADSP E-Badges Academy. This is a nationally-recognized credential with different levels (DSP-I, DSP-II, DSP-III, FLS). Each E-Badge earned challenges the DSP taking the module to expand their knowledge and apply it in situations with the people they support. The coursework included a rigorous 100 hours of online classwork as well as demonstrated application of the principles learned.

"The staff members we are recognizing today have shown tremendous dedication to the field and the people they support by putting in many hours on weekends, evenings,



PHOTO PROVIDED

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and around their busy schedules, to earn these credentials," said Jennifer Saunders, CEO of Liberty ARC. "We are so proud of you and all that you have accomplished. You represent the best of what it means to be a direct support worker."

Graduates of Liberty ARC's third class are: Karen Allen, Erika Amar, Kayla Caldarone, Keisha Carter, Kayla Dwight, Jessica Ferguson, Chrissy Friello, Dawn Fridenberger, Emily Gwozdz, Samantha Loucks, Ashley Melendez, Melissa Montanye, Sa-

mantha Morris, Monica Reynicke, and Alaina Sahler.

"Both in my professional role and as a family member of someone with a disability, I want you to know how very important your work is," Willow Baer, Commissioner of New York State's OPWDD, told the graduates. "You empower the people we support to live a life full of choices, dignity, and value. It's an honor to be with you today as you celebrate earning this important credential, which not only elevates your practice and career, but

helps bring excellence to the people we support and the Direct Support field."

Liberty ARC announced their membership with NADSP and inclusion in the statewide OPWDD Pilot Program in the winter of 2023. Since then, 36 DSP's at Liberty ARC have been credentialed.

During the ceremony, Karen Allen, a Senior Habilitation Coordinator at Liberty ARC, spoke to her fellow graduates and guests during the ceremony.

"In the years I have been in this

field, I have been a witness to countless moments of joy, resilience, and transformation — in the lives of the people we support, my co-workers and myself," said Karen Allen. "One of the many things I've learned: is that no matter how many years I've been doing this work, there is always more to learn, more to reflect on, and more ways to grow and enrich my scope of knowledge.... being a Direct Support Professional is more than just a job. It is a career of meaning."

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