

THE AABR ADVANCE



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WINTER | 2019



Damon Visits His Dad *With Help From Esan Torrington*

Esan Torrington, Residential Manager of AABR's Bladt Residence in Queens, received a sobering call from the father of Damon, an Individual supported by AABR. Damon's dad stated that he was terminally ill and was deemed medically unable to fly to see any of his family members. His older son was coming from Florida to see him in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where the family originated. Knowing that Damon's life-long dream was to return to see his father, Mr. Torrington was quick to mention, "Perhaps both sons could come to you". Damon's dad immediately latched onto the thought of being reunited with them at his most dire time of need.

Mr. Torrington vowed that he would do all he could to make their wishes come true. He spent countless hours poring over a proposal that included travel arrangements, expenditures, pre-cautionary planning, proximity and accessibility of medical facilities, etc. Finally the day arrived and Damon was on his way to New Mexico with Mr. Torrington by his side. Throughout the entire wait at the airport and during the flight itself, Damon continued to say "I'm going to see my Dad! I'm going to see my Dad!"

The family met them at the airport. They were so excited to see each other as they hugged Damon and held onto him for a long time. As Esan stepped back and observed this family being reunited for the first time in over fifteen years, he shared with The Advance, "There was such joy on the father's face...they just couldn't get enough of each other. I felt like I had really done something worthwhile". At the end of the trip, Damon's brother was so filled with renewed love for his brother that he vowed to be in his life, ever after. Phone calls have already begun and in a sincere effort to connect further with Damon, an invitation has been extended to Damon for a vacation in Florida at his home.

This is what it's all about. This is why we do what we do. To make it happen. To do all in our power to help those we support live full and satisfying lives. Mr. Torrington continued, "I told my wife, 'the feeling I have right now, I don't think I'll even have again. It was the best experience for Damon. I'm just so glad that I was given the opportunity to be a part of it'".



HOW TO DONATE



Visit aabr.org and click the donate button on the upper right side of your screen.



Call 718.321.3800 and ask to speak to the Development Department.



Mail a check made out to
AABR Foundation to
ATTN: Development Department
AABR
1508 College Point Blvd.
P.O. Box 560247
College Point, NY 11356

OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT



Visit our Treasure Box Thrift Store at 164-09 Hillside Ave, Jamaica, NY 11434 to shop or donate used clothing and household items. You can also call 718.558.0390 to arrange a pick up of large donation items.



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Remembering Flora Fried

Longtime AABR Benefits Administrator

As Hanukkah ended on December 10th, the AABR family lost Flora Fried, who was the Agency's bright light for over 30 years.

As AABR's Benefits Administrator, Flora made it her business to go above and beyond to help countless staff with both their benefits and with their lives. Often, a line would form outside her door with staff needing to ask her "just one more question". She was intelligent, dedicated, patient, kind and caring about any person who needed guidance.

She is survived by her husband Jack, daughters Heidi and Amy, and grandchildren, Ian, Cara, Hailey, Evan, Connor and Logan. And though she was fulfilled with her own family, we couldn't help but feel that she was one of our own. She was that near and dear to us.

In honor of the work she has done and lives she had affected, AABR will be dedicating the Human Resources Conference Room at the Agency's Main Office, College Point location to her memory.

"She was my wing person. From the moment she walked in the door, she was such an unbelievably pleasant person. No matter how many times someone called, she was pleasant and accommodating, no matter what. We've been through thick and thin together, and had breakfast together each day at 7AM to catch up and to share life. She was always willing to lend a hand and help. Always."

— Eileen Keegan
Director, Human Resources

"She was like a sister to me, part of the family. Such a sweet person, a sweetheart, very kind, had a good heart. She taught me so much in my personal life. She was very influential. I miss her very much."

— Shelly Morgan
Human Resources

"She was the happiest person on the planet. You've never met a more positive person. She was always, always pleasant. In all the years, I never heard her say an unkind word. Ever."

— Kathryn Flood
Assistant Executive Director

"She was always helpful, so knowledgeable about everything medical, what was covered, who to speak to, and she always got back to me in minutes. She had very good instincts about Orientation candidates. She was kind and caring, always ready to listen. We had a lot in common. We shared the same faith, strong family values and were always talking about our grandchildren. She was loved by all and will be deeply missed."

— Caron Gelfand
Orientation Director

Conference Room Plaque Wording:

This room is dedicated in honor of **Flora Fried** For her faithful devotion to improving the lives of those with developmental disabilities.

"As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us; as we remember them."
- Jewish Prayer
2018



The 103rd Precinct Comes to Wellington Hall

AABR is known to maintain strong connections in the community. At AABR's Wellington Hall in Jamaica, Queens, we were recently visited by the local 103rd Precinct's Detective Costa and Detective Johnson! Carey Gerardi, Program Director at Wellington Hall and former police officer, reached out to the local precinct to arrange for a presentation to occur. The police officers were both willing and interested in obliging. In fact, they went a step further and visited the program on two separate days!

The detectives brought bullet proof vests, shields, walkie-talkie's and other equipment they use on the job that the Individuals could put on, hold, etc. They later came back for a second day with a police car that the Individuals could sit inside as long as they were wearing their "Ride Along" badges. The officers were open and honest with the Individuals as they talked about helping people in the community, difficulties on the job and how they used their equip-

All-New Annual Charity Give Back Event

This holiday season, Angee Thomas, assistant manager at AABR's Klamar Residence in Queens, spearheaded an all-new Annual Charity Give Back Event. The event was generously hosted by 333 Lounge in Brooklyn. Ms. Thomas' goal was to serve a Thanksgiving meal to 100 people, and together with AABR staff and volunteers, the event was a huge success!

Fourteen years ago Ms. Thomas relocated to New York from California. Over the years, friends invited her to share many holiday meals. Ms. Thomas shared with The Advance, "Some people don't have that and I wanted it to be known that there was somewhere for them to go. I always wanted to make a difference in someone's life. Sometimes I feel that more can be done. Opportunity came knocking and we answered".

What started out as the desire to plan a Thanksgiving meal morphed into a larger event as more people got involved - more than Ms. Thomas could have ever imagined. Charlene Williams and her church members, Marcia Mills, Sandra Bowman, Colleena Dunkley, Oreitha Waithe, Stacey Robles, and her father cooked, served, and provided canned goods while AABR staffers made anonymous donations. Caron Gelfand collected and boxed items at AABR's main office for pick-up, while Dennis Weeks, a professional chef who met Ms. Thomas while she was handing out flyers, offered his services."

People supported by AABR were encouraged to participate. For Tommy, it was a life changing event as he was elated to serve others. Kevin, Shamar, Ante, Deborah, Andrea, Dimitroula, and Darae were



ecstatic to sort and bag grocery items. Even those with substantial challenges were excited to be part of the event. Someone was heard to exclaim, "We're feeding people!" Such inspirational involvement by the people we support prompted their being recipients of the first ever, "AABR's Charity Event Participation Award".



ADVANCE Developing Leaders

Once again AABR is at the forefront of the industry as we initiate ADVANCE, a new educational, mentorship program designed to develop our emerging leaders. Twelve seats are available each semester for a 12 week program that combines foundational online training with weekly hands-on practicum sessions. One to one mentorship is also provided in areas requiring further enhancement. Practicums include "How To" presentations by exemplary agency managers and directors, as well as outside presenters who are leaders in the field. Candidates are active and involved during practicums and are assigned both written and oral presentations. Candidates are chosen by Managers and Directors of the Agency and interviewed before being selected for the coveted twelve seats.

Long-time AABR Directors, Mary Frank, LCSW and Carline Brown, MSW, head up this initiative as both were interested in looking to ADVANCE candidates to the next level of their careers and further develop our AABR work force.

AABR, Inc
1508 College Point Blvd.
P.O. Box 560247
College Point, NY 11356



MAY 3rd, 2019
TERRACE ON THE PARK
FLUSHING, QUEENS

63rd ANNIVERSARY GALA

EMPOWERING TOGETHER

SAVE THE DATE