

AABR ADVANCE

Empowering People With Special Needs



CAR PARADES FOR DSP's

We've always had a deep respect for DSP's and all they do. Whether it's changing a life by teaching a new skill, preparing a meal that someone can swallow safely, or helping a person achieve a life long wish, DSP's are there for those we support. When COVID hit, our admiration deepened even further. DSP's were out in full force caring for Individuals in a myriad of ways, staying by their side every step of the way. Whether it was providing comfort during illness, teaching them how to protect themselves by wearing a mask, or simply quelling fears as "a new unrecognizable normal" began to take hold. DSP's have been there. Nothing could be more important than being the one to tell an Individual that "everything is going to be alright" when someone was afraid. To be that comfort, to be that constant in a life was an honor that our employees took seriously.

In recognition of the gallant efforts of our DSPs, AABR Directors "took to the streets" forming Car Parades that went to each and every facility. Libby Traynor, Hezikeigh Elliott, Kathryn Flood, Ruth Edoho, Eileen Keegan, Alina Akhsanov, Mary Frank,

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THANKING DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS



Direct Support Professionals battled and fought the COVID-19 Pandemic on the frontlines. They are still fighting it. To honor them, providers across the state celebrated Direct Support Professionals Week in September.

While DSP Week occurs every year, more had to be done this year to show our adoration for them, because while many occupations were able to work from home, DSP's could not. Many of our hero DSP's risked their own health having to take trains and busses to work. They endured hardships and time away from their families. Yet they kept coming to work to provide care for the individuals living in our residences. A few staff members even contracted the virus themselves. Then, when healthy, they returned to the residence and did everything in their power to keep your loved one safe.



For this year's DSP week, we did our best to shower them with gifts, admiration, and, of course, lots of food. To show their appreciation, many of our supporters also donated meals. While DSP week has passed, we should always show our thanks for their dedication. So if you'd like to contribute something to show your thanks, please visit aabr.org/dspweek.

While the DSP's have always gone above and beyond the call of duty, during this Pandemic, they have proven why they are the dictionary definition of essential, "absolutely necessary; extremely important." And even those words don't seem to define their significance truly.

We thank the Direct Support Professionals of AABR for their dedication to those with special needs.





CAR PARADES - Continued

Caron Gelfand, Tania Moreta, Learie Carrington, Delores Henry, Chantal DaSilveira, Nigeria Worthington, Barbara Sheridan, and Gnanendra Sinha put aside everything in order to express their utmost gratitude and pride in AABR Employees.

ADR, Tania Moreta headed up the Car Parade Squad making sure we had balloons, markers, air horns, signs, and streamers for the Car Parade Extravaganza. Assistant Executive Director Kathryn Flood ensured that every facility had cupcakes and assorted desserts to commemorate the celebration, handing them out herself at each residence. Director of Residential Services, Hezikeigh Elliott made sure that the group stayed together, never leaving a single car behind as we navigated side streets, highways, and traffic. People in the community were so moved by our display of gratitude that by the time we got to Parkway Men, even strangers got involved in the cheering and hoopla for AABR DSP's!

Our words can never express our sheer gratitude for all each and every staff person does each day, all day, every day. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

47TH GOLF TOURNAMENT A SUCCESS



Our friends at the Club Management Association of America: Metropolitan Chapter significantly contributed financially to support us during the pandemic's height. Once again, the MCMA didn't break tradition and held its 47th annual golf tournament to benefit AABR.

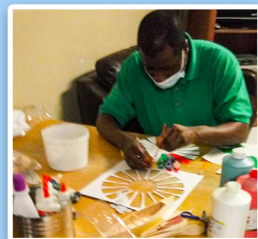
The tournament, held at Sleepy Hollow Country Club, made appropriate modifications in order to meet the health and safety guidelines during this COVID pandemic. Instead of a shotgun start, foursomes had staggered tee times throughout the day. While players were able to choose whether or not to cover their faces amongst their teammates on the course, masks were required whenever they were in the proximity of other players. Instead of a sitdown breakfast, food was grab and go. There was no formal ceremony, though dinner was offered in an extremely socially distant setting on their outside lawn.

While the tournament will, of course, benefit our individuals, this year, the Club Managers decided to honor our Essential AABR Workers. As part of DSP week, they used a portion of the proceeds to provide each member of our DSP staff with a gift card.

We cannot thank the Club Managers enough for their support for the past 47 years and especially during these past few months. Their contributions to our past success, as well as our continued ability to empower those with developmental disabilities in the future, are immeasurable.

GRAND AVE. A PLACE OF INNOVATION & CREATIVITY

During the Pandemic it's been difficult for people with disabilities to understand why they've been unable to participate in the community activities they've always enjoyed. However, these past 7 months, Grand Ave. staff has collaborated to offer bright and uplifting times for the Individuals.



Whether it's joining a group puzzle, playing table games or team basketball in the backyard, there's an energy that's unmistakable. "Each activity is never the same. Every day is different. The guys are engaged. Stress is down, and behavioral difficulties have been reduced. They've been doing this the whole time, the whole time!" said Learie Carrington, ADR. "The arts and crafts are their favorite. The theme is always different. There's suspense in the air...they're excited. They want to know what is coming next!"

IN THE SPOTLIGHT - AABR'S MAINTENANCE CREW!

There have been so many people in New York alone who have gone extensively above and beyond during the Coronavirus Pandemic in unprecedented ways. Essential workers such as our own DSP's, doctors, nurses, delivery drivers, sanitation workers, supermarket clerks, and cashiers continued to work throughout it all and have remained steadfast in the sole purpose of keeping the people we support healthy, well, and ultimately, alive. So many performed heroic, self-sacrificing, noble acts, even to the detriment of themselves. At AABR, behind the scenes, from day one in March 2020 stood the AABR Maintenance Crew: Luis Mejia, Robert "Lee" Lewis, brothers, Mohamed S. Kamal and Mohamed M. Kamal, Shameer Gajnabi, James Weldon, and Jose Gonzalez, led by Director of Maintenance, Luis Reynoso.

From delivering PPE three times each week to every facility or rearranging furniture to allow for social distancing, the AABR Maintenance crew had it covered.

"I see Maintenance every day working so hard, coming when they are needed."

- Shelly Ann Cattle, AABR Staff

Then, amid the Pandemic, Tropical Storm Isaias barreled through the five boroughs and Long Island, and the Maintenance crew was there, once again. AABR Employee, Shelly Ann Cattle wrote into The Advance, "I see Maintenance every day working so hard, coming when they are needed. Especially with the storm at Linden Ladies and Linden Men, they cleared away fallen trees to make a path for the Individuals and staff."

At the start of the Pandemic, so little was known about the Virus, and fears were great. Wanting to protect his crew, Mr. Reynoso often worked around the clock, sleeping in the shop to ensure a Maintenance presence and to meet each and every need. Often a call would come in at 9 or 10 PM for a PPE request. Mr. Reynoso just knew he needed to be there, at virtually a moment's notice for the staff, which he holds in such high regard.

"They (the DSP's) deserve all the credit for all they've been doing to care for Individuals who've been sick and others who needed to be kept virus-free." When asked about the men he works with, Mr. Reynoso further stated, "They're a good crew, a great team to work with, they're funny, they laugh. They never ever complain. I trust them so much. We have to work in an environment of trust. We're working with machines, and we have to be cautious since the Individuals are home. Working with them, it's a good feeling, they're really a close family." Thanks go out to the Maintenance Crew for all they do, for the care they take, for supporting us all during this most difficult and challenging time.



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