

# ANCOR Direct Support Professionals Recognition Award 2008

## *Celebrating America's Quiet Heroes*

ANCOR's National Advocacy Campaign (NAC) celebrates direct support professionals' (DSPs) skills, dedication and humanitarianism through its annual Direct Support Professionals Recognition Award. This year, ANCOR members submitted nearly 200 nominations from which the Selection Committee chose one national and 39 state winners. The Committee also took special note of the courageous acts of an exceptional DSP from New Orleans who lived in her automobile for three months while she relocated and supported her consumers in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Nominations were judged on criteria that included how well the nominee helped consumers build social capital, fostered independence, and established ties to their individuals and families. Their level of creativity demonstrated on the job was also a factor. *The winners were honored on Tuesday, April 15 during an awards ceremony at ANCOR's 2008 Management Practice Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.*

The individual stories of these honorees vividly demonstrate just how critical DSPs are to our healthcare system and the tremendous need that exists for compassionate, devoted skilled workers. As you read their stories, it is important to consider, not only people with disabilities, but also the fragile seniors and families who need direct support. Understand that if you don't know how important DSPs are today, you will when you or someone you love needs their supports.

*Photos by Riverview Photography*



## 2008 DSP of the Year

**Mike Garcia**  
*Catholic Community Services/  
Community Living Program*  
Tucson, AZ



Photo by Riverview Photography

Mike Garcia is a humble guy. He shouldn't be. He possesses an exemplary ability to recognize another person's immediate needs and then figures out a way to organize and systematize accommodations and help them realize success. These qualities have earned him opportuni-

ties to move from being a direct support professional (DSP) into administrative positions. However, Mike's heart lies with the people he serves. He politely turns down offers of advancement believing that his strengths and purpose in life are to work with individuals directly and to advocate for their needs at all times. He has been doing just this for an amazing 15 years.

A born innovator, Mike created and teaches a training method called the Community Living Program (CLP) Boot Camp. In the boot camp, he cross trains staff on necessary consumer services and the specific skills required to support each individual. This program gives people better services and graduates from the CLP Boot Camp receive the title of DSP3 and an increase in their hourly wages.

Mike's dedication and creativity not only brings out the best in his colleagues, but also in the individuals he serves. His work and sincere camaraderie creates rewarding behavioral changes. Mike's honed instincts enabled him to quickly identify a person's serious situation that was resolved by surgery. Mike's commitment to this person did not end at the hospital door. When the doctors wanted the individual to go to a rehabilitation facility, Mike said, "No, he wants and needs to come home and we can do it." And, they did! Mike arranged everything in advance and utilizing the CLP Boot Camp method, this individual recovered at home and far quicker than expected.

In addition to his dedication and creativity,

Mike exhibits friendship with his consumers by volunteering his personal time to help them achieve their dreams. Mike once camped out overnight at Best Buy to purchase a computer during the annual post-Thanksgiving "Black Friday" sale. Among his other self-less actions, Mike has kept night vigil over a frightened person undergoing a sleep apnea test and he spent his own time locating a grant and filling out the paperwork to successfully obtain \$2,500 for a person's dental needs.

Clearly, Mike demonstrates devotion, loyalty and friendship along with his exceptional work ethic and is a shining example of all that a DSP of the Year encompasses.

## Unsung Hero Award

**Deborah Anderson**  
*Volunteers of America Community  
Living Services*  
Metairie, LA



Deborah Anderson genuinely loves the people she serves. She demonstrates her affection by taking them on family outings and protecting them as if they were her own.

During Hurricane Katrina, Deborah and her family lost everything:

their home, car, clothes and personal belongings. Managing to relocate to a new home in Texas, Deborah and her family were living expense free. Yet, unable to leave her consumers behind to fend for themselves, Deborah chose to return to New Orleans. For the next three months, Deborah's car was her home as she worked determinedly to make sure that her consumers were settled and received the care that they needed.

Deborah's actions helped the helpless, instilled hope and served as a voice for those otherwise left behind. She is the heart of faith and inspiration—a true unsung hero.

# 2008 State Winners

## Arkansas



**Jerry Stout** of Bost, Inc. passed up a lucrative position with a prestigious company to be a DSP. He has no regrets. Jerry is a Supported Employment Coach, one of six agency team leaders and

also hosts a consumer in his home as an “alternate living” setting. Jerry has the option of finding substitute staff when he vacations, but he opts to take his consumer with him. They are family. His consumer’s confidence has grown immensely under Jerry’s guidance, making his own coffee, operating the VCR/DVD player, taking the lead when they are traveling and even crossing the border into Mexico independently!

## Arizona



**Tracey Preszler** of The Centers for Habilitation has been making each day fun and exciting for the staff and their consumers for the past 10 years. Everyone gets involved in her activities, one of which is a Halloween Haunted House. No one is left out of this annual event:

Consumers lacking mobility are turned into ghoulish vampires and ghosts, delighting in their opportunity to scare intrepid visitors. Tracey empowers people with disabilities through her compassion and her devotion to helping everyone become the best they can be.

## California

**Rita Castro**, Lifehouse, manages to adapt her style to work with eight consumers individually and has been making a difference with them for 16 years. Rita assures that their needs are met, all the while sustaining their dignity and uniqueness. A client who was vulnerable to credit card company marketing ploys was on the edge of bankruptcy. Rita encouraged him to save his mail and open it with her so he would have her support when making his financial decisions. He managed to pay off his debt and avoid falling victim to credit card enticements again.

## Colorado



**Kris Duncan**, Imagine! Innovations, passed up numerous offers for administrative promotions in order to continue her work as a DSP. Kris views DSP work to be a bit like the lyrics to Hotel California, “You can check-out, but you can never leave.” Her heart is with her medically fragile consumers who rely heavily on

her to assist them in daily activities. Kris works with grace and humor ensuring that they are comfortable, safely positioned in their wheel chairs and that their food is pureed to their liking.

## Connecticut



**Kim Brown**, Ability Beyond Disability, has seen a lot of change in how individuals with disabilities receive services in her 17 years as a DSP. This accumulation of knowledge makes her an invaluable

resource to her colleagues. Kim always takes full advantage of teachable moments to promote independence and is exceptionally skilled at helping her consumers find their voices and advocate for themselves. Kim believes in her work and is proud that her daughter followed in her footsteps to become a DSP, too.

## Delaware

**Rhonda Patrick**, Mosaic Sherwood, is a people magnet; they just naturally gravitate to her. The five gentlemen she supports are genuinely happy to see her, whether it is at home, in the community or at their day program site. They count on her to make their wants, needs and concerns known and trust her in a very unique way. Rhonda works to integrate them into the community by introducing them to different places and experiences. Through her own perseverance, Rhonda worked with a consumer to build his confidence until he no longer needed sedation for routine eye exams.

## Florida



**Susan Kaminski**, ResCare Pinellas, is a proud mother of six and an active grandmother with a passion for her work. A Residential Home Manager, Susan’s position requires that she not only work as a DSP,

but also provide managing supervision for a home. Regardless of physical, mental or emotional challenges, all Susan’s residents feel they are an integral player in their home. One of her individuals wanted to move to Georgia to be near her sister. Susan helped her work through the obstacles and benchmarks to make it happen and successfully achieve a huge personal goal in her life.

## Georgia



**Sylvia Flockhart**, Enable of Georgia, Inc., possesses the natural ability to recognize the capabilities of people, and not their limitations. She enhances the lives of the people she supports with her focus on community inclusion. Sylvia’s consumers can rarely be

found at home; they enjoy going to bookstores, coffee shops, restaurants, movies and other community activities. Sylvia supports a person with a dog who is learning how to care for his pet and she works out at a gym alongside another consumer. Always keeping an eye on the big picture, Sylvia doesn’t see goals as unconnected and random. Instead, she understands that they are each a step in the ladder to bringing a level of independence to each person.

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## Illinois



**Janice Reese**, Clearbrook, works in a unique day program called Partners in Adult Living (PAL). Here young adults with multiple challenges enjoy opportunities to become familiar with technology, community-based experiences and personal choice. These individuals require total assistance with all their personal care, plus each uti-

lizes some form of communication other than the spoken word. Janice incorporates communication devices into their personal needs programs to assure that no opportunity for a thought; a comment or choice goes unexpressed. Janice assures that her individuals have the fullest access to their selected experiences and plans. At every step, Janice expresses her highest regard and respect for their achievements.

## Indiana



**Daisey Diggins**, Mosaic of Northern Indiana, gives 110 percent of herself to her individuals and her colleagues. Always willing to help out when needed, Daisey is committed to her job, does everything to the best of her ability and expects the same of others. Daisey steps out of her comfort zone in times of need and excels in building

relationships with peers, families and consumers. By taking one of her individuals to church on Sundays, she is able to assist him with his ushering job, yet another one of her consumers is now a volunteer at a pet store. Daisey helped another get a new Primary Care Physician after ascertaining that staff, family and the individual felt the current doctor was discourteous.

## Iowa



**Pete Faust**, Opportunity Village, has been continually serving others for 30 years. He accomplishes success by first and foremost becoming friends with his consumers. Pete supports people who can be aggressive at times, so it is

particularly important that he earn their trust and confidence. Other staff members seek his advice and he mentors many. Pete chooses to stay with his people because he worries that it is hard on them not to see the same friendly, familiar face on a regular basis. Pete's passion for serving is extraordinary and he is an inspiration to all.

## Kansas



**Andrea McMurray**, Cottonwood, Inc., supports seven people with rich, busy lives and manages to get everyone where they want to go, when they want to go. Andrea recognizes each individual's right to make meaningful choices, and to take reasonable risks. While Andrea has highly marketable skills and talents that would allow her to

make a lot of money in other jobs, her passion lies in providing exemplary direct support. An exceptional mentor for other DSPs, Andrea provides them extra support and guidance in their quest to help people with disabilities shape their own futures.

## Kentucky

**Glenys Buchner**, LifeSkills, Inc., inspires her individuals to try new things and live life to the fullest! Family members, church members and even doctors speak of the transformations they have witnessed in the lives of the individuals she supports. With her giving heart, strong work ethic and passion for life, Glenys ensures that the eight individuals she supports have a wonderful home. They enjoy a life filled with relationships, opportunities and accomplishments, such as taking ownership of their own finances; registering to vote; enjoying camping vacations and becoming photographers. Glenys is a shining example of how DSPs make a huge difference in the lives of others.

## Louisiana

**Bryan Bordelon** of Evergreen Presbyterian Ministries arrives to work full of energy, eager to get busy. Happily greeting his individuals, Bryan rounds them up to begin their day working as a lawn crew. After hours, Bryan is out in the community networking to develop community employment options for other individuals with disabilities. In the evenings and on weekends, Bryan makes time to talk with his individuals on the phone, simply because they miss him. Bryan never fails to demonstrate his respect and unconditional love for his consumers. Bryan Bordelon has found his calling in life.

## Maine



**Joyce and Mahlon Willis**, Spurwink Services, have been using their strengths as a couple to help others for more than 15 years. One of their individuals, Jon, had a complex medical condition that required someone to sit with

him for hours to cue him to breathe, even at 2:00 a.m. cuing him as often as every 15 seconds. Their vigilance paid off. Interrupting Jon's cyclical actions brought significant improvements. Jon became a person who could communicate, make choices, express joy and displeasure, smile, live in a family setting and go out into his community. While Joyce and Mahlon have their own home, they rarely live in it and don't consider this a sacrifice. They modestly view their work as DSPs as time when they simply enrich the lives of others.

## Maryland



**Sandra McKnight**, Intervals, takes DSP work to the next level. Blessed with an infectious positive attitude and nurturing and compassionate ways, Sandra's desire is to promote growth and personal satisfaction among her consumers. Taking all the daily challenges in her stride, Sandra willing and unselfishly sacrifices her personal time to help her people. When one of her individuals was in and out of hospital, Sandra was by her side. Later, when she was transferred to a nursing home closer to her family, Sandra drove the three-hour trip numerous times to provide comfort and support and ensure a successful transition.

## Massachusetts

**April Stout** of WCI (Work, Community, Independence) is a calm, upbeat, warm and encouraging presence to her consumers and her philosophical approach has served them well: "Have them do as much as they can on their own and teach them the rest bit by bit." Bob always wanted to learn how to read, but never had the opportunity. April found "Hooked on Phonics" and spent hours helping him learn basic reading skills, which greatly improved his self-esteem. Tom wanted to go to college and fly a plane. April not only found a college night class for him, but also modified flight lessons. Then, she actually flew with him! Through her dedication and perseverance, April helps others realize their dreams.

## Michigan



**Pamela Cameron** of ResCare/CAMI gives supports around the clock, at home and work at the France Home. She begins each day providing for her husband, an individual with disabilities, and still arrives at work ready to give her all. Pamela is trilingual and signs; skills that she puts to very good use. When Jose

was separated from his father, Pamela and his support team managed to reunite him with his family in Mexico. Working attentively with an autistic consumer, Pamela discovered that specific behaviors are triggered by specific foods. In addition, Pamela teaches signing and translates for a deaf individual. Pamela's total commitment and dedication allow her consumers to thrive and be the best they can be.

## Minnesota



**Tammy Delfun**, Hammer Residences, Inc., regards her DSP work as a passion, not just a job. Tammy is the most sought-after staff member to help male residents process emotional pain and difficult issues. By encouraging them to break out of their routines and do the things that bring them joy and fulfillment, Tammy instills confidence in them to make their own decisions. Tammy listens without censure and provides her consumers feedback to aid in their decision-making. Tammy's compassion and dedication extends beyond her duties as a DSP. A champion for the vulnerable, she cares for an aged mother, is legal guardian of a former consumer and rescued and befriended an abused animal.

## Missouri



**Kevin Barrett** of St. Louis Arc has been a DSP for 20 years; 15 of them with the same four men. Although he has taken on supervisory roles several times, Kevin jokes that he always manages to "demote" himself. Preferring to be in daily contact with his four men, Kevin understands that long-term relationships are vital to having a quality life. Kevin provides transportation for Larry to accompany his aging mother to the symphony or theater; he arranges for Dennis to call his sister and visit her monthly at her supported living home; he supports Cary in being a responsible and loyal owner to his nine-year-old black lab, Lady. And, although Rick died

in 1999, Kevin still stays in touch with his mother, sending her a note or calling on Rick's birthday. To Kevin, DSP work doesn't seem like a job. He says, "I enjoy so much being with these guys, and being part of their lives and their families' lives."

## Montana

**Ladonna Yates** of Opportunity Resources, Inc. is the go-to person for recreational and home crisis. Ladonna saved the life of a consumer with communication barriers. When she realized his situation was urgent, Ladonna got him to the hospital. By working with him to overcome his fears, he proceeded with major surgery and post-operative care. His mother died unexpectedly, so Ladonna stepped in to help him and his brothers manage their grief, and also guided them through the purchase of their own home. When not handling a crisis, Ladonna enjoys organizing consumer trips to Yellowstone Park, the Black Hills and Custer Battlefield. Ladonna is a proven advocate and a consummate DSP.

## Nebraska



**Betty Leners**, Mosaic Beatrice, is a resident's and a supervisor's dream come true. Exceptionally punctual and dependable, Betty is someone people count on. By making the wants and needs of people she serves a priority, Betty's interaction with her consumers demonstrates her love and respect for them. Betty's contributions as a team leader are also significant as she is able to visualize desired outcomes, realize them and teach others to do the same.

## New Jersey



**Owen Woolley** of the National Institute for People with Disabilities is a natural-born advocate. Owen strives to understand his consumers' anxieties, upsets and psychiatric issues and then follow the plan that will help overcome them. When Owen met Kelly, an individual with intellectual disabilities and Cerebral Palsy, he not only helped her learn to express herself, but to find a passion in life—cooking. If something seems unjust, Owen seeks justice, not only for himself, but also for his consumers and colleagues. A deeply caring person, Owen wants everyone to grow and flourish.

## New York



**Jessica Elam**, the Arc of Delaware County, embraces a zest for life that fills her consumers with a drive and passion to do more. Jessica assists people in achieving their goals by assessing their interests, exposing them to new opportunities and supporting them within the community. Struck by the passion in Nancy's voice when talking about her dream of becoming a star, Jessica enrolled Nancy in an acting class, accompanied her to class and helped her practice her lines. When a local actors guild held auditions, Nancy and Jessica both landed roles. With Jessica's support, Nancy became the star! Jessica is caring, innovative, self-sacrificing, an advocate and a friend. The ideal DSP.

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## New York



**Mickey LaCoppala** of Liberty doesn't know the meaning of can't. He meets every challenge with a "What can we do to make this happen?" outlook. Involved with his local Town Council, Mickey gave the gentlemen he supports the

opportunity to be involved as well. The meetings are televised and Mickey's consumers frequently appear on screen as active participants. Mickey clearly understands the value of social capital and helps build it with the individuals he supports. He is a shining example of commitment, tenacity and devotion.

## North Carolina



**Larry Revels** of ResCare, Inc., puts passion and zeal into his work as a DSP. Larry effectively and patiently provides social and personal care skills training to a very unpredictable young man with limited communication skill.

Larry works with him seven days a week, putting in extra hours to monitor occasional seizures. Through Larry's diligence and creativity, this individual now holds a job at a landfill; enjoys a network of friends at Pool Tournaments, fishing trips and Bingo Nights; is a Moose Lodge member; and, very importantly, has reconnected with his estranged family. Larry is a selfless and faithful advocate for the needs and rights of individuals with disabilities. He is an exemplary DSP.

## Ohio



**Debbie Shrode**, Wood Lane Residential Services, Inc., never considered working anywhere else and is now invaluable to her team. A stalwart advocate for independence, Deb assists residents, emotionally and physically as

they transition into the ICF/MR facility from larger institutions or their parent's home. Battling cancer, Deb never dwells on her own situation. Instead, she gives extra support to her consumers' health. In particular, special attention is paid to a lady preparing for cancer surgery and radiation. Deb's unselfish dedication, perseverance and life long love of DSP work is an inspiration.

## Oklahoma



**Katherine Jordan**, Phoenix Residential Services, Inc., volunteered to support her neighbor Nora even before she became a DSP. Everyday, after eight hours at her full time job at a local nursing home, Kathy heads for Nora's

house. Kathy immediately picks up on the needs of wheelchair-bound Nora and her Dad, an injured Vietnam Veteran. Kathy created a physical therapy schedule for Nora, who is now able to pull herself into a standing position. To buoy Nora's self-esteem, Kathy found a hairdresser who donates her time and makes Nora feel beautiful. Kathy is a role model for Nora and her family and a loving mother to her own two teenage girls. She is an impressive DSP: A dedicated teacher, friend and advocate with a strong work ethic and the sheer determination to make a difference.

## Oregon

**Aaron McMillan** of Sunny Oaks, Inc. walks through the door and eyes light up. Nothing is impossible when Aaron is around. Whether it's an everyday activity or a special event, Aaron builds people's self-esteem and social skills by giving them his complete, undivided attention. One of Aaron's specialties is taking extra care to ensure that everyone's clothes are not just clean, but stylish. Shopping with consumers at thrift shops is one of Aaron's pleasures. When a beautiful sapphire formal didn't quite fit, he altered it; Aaron knows that when his consumers look good, they feel good about themselves. His attention to detail and selfless giving make Aaron an invaluable and much loved DSP.

## Pennsylvania



**Tia DeFlavia** of SPIN, Inc. doesn't think she does anything extraordinary, but to others, she makes the impossible possible. Tia's person-centered philosophy benefits her individuals in building their interpersonal

relationships and social skills. Tia's work schedule is entirely determined by the three women she supports. In the past year, she has supported each one in their employment by obtaining better work schedules and encouraging them to keep their commitments. Tia helped one of her individuals process her grief over friendships she lost when her employer went out of business. Tia has a gift for connecting with people and supporting them in what they want and need. Thanks to Tia, they believe in themselves more strongly.

## South Dakota



**Kelly Keiser** of South Dakota Achieve thrives on providing training to people with communication barriers and sensory processing issues. By incorporating the use of switches and other

augmentive communications systems in their daily activities, Kelly fills their days with interactive tasks, such as creating scrapbooks, reading, singing, playing games and planning parties and special events. Kelly excels in keeping people calm and on task. She brings sunshine into the lives of everyone she helps, including her two adopted sons who both have Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

## Tennessee



**Lashanda Pillow** of Bios of Tennessee, LLC believes in "walking the walk," and practices this philosophy everyday. Communication skills are everything to Lashanda, not just verbal, but body language

as well. Through her devoted attention, her individual now has the ability to communicate his needs and desires through his body language and tone. Lashanda recognizes the importance of his desire and right to develop relationships in his community and promotes his independence, safety and well-being in every aspect of his life.

## Texas



**John Seesholtz** of EduCare Community Living has become a strong mentor and friend to the men living at Timber Meadow for the past eight years. The job is a tough one because the men he works with need quite a bit of assistance during the day and frequently exhibit challenging behaviors that test John's patience and diplomacy.

But, for John, his time at work with the guys is quality for him and he strives to make it quality time for them as well. Picnics, hikes and nature walks in the hill country are just a few of the activities he routinely plans. John sees himself as their advocate and cheerleader, always giving them the benefit of the doubt when they struggle with their tasks, always giving them credit for their efforts.

## Utah

**Justin Gibson** of Mosaic is called "the Rock" by his consumers. Justin goes the extra mile to be a friend and confidant to the people he supports. Justin was successful in helping write a letter that garnered 20 complimentary tickets to a Utah Jazz game. When the tickets arrived, the seating didn't include provision for a wheelchair. Undaunted, Justin assisted that individual to his seat by slowly helping him maneuver the steps, even carrying him some of the way. When a consumer moved to care center, Justin helped her move in, setting up her fish tank and plasma TV. Justin has a huge heart and makes it his business to make a difference in other people's lives.

## Vermont

**Tammie Clifford** of Washington County Mental Health Services, Inc. tackles her consumers' issues head-on, approaching each day with fresh resolve and determination to make a meaningful difference. When she began working with an overweight consumer, Tammie prevailed where others had failed. Tammie recognized that the extra pounds were fast becoming a significant health issue. Combining a regimen of exercise, diet planning and cooking, Tammie made steady and significant progress in intervening with the individual's obsessive activities, ultimately changing her routine. Today, her consumer enjoys regular daily exercise, has learned healthy cooking techniques and views eating as a social event.

## Virginia



**Kathy Roseberry** of Community Alternatives of Virginia works hard to ensure that her consumers receive a listening ear. Kind and warm-hearted, Kathy respects her consumers and, in turn, they trust her. Kathy provides outlets in the community and encourages her people to bowl, attend concerts or

decorate vehicles for parades. She arranges for them to help others in need by ringing bells for the Salvation Army, collecting for local food drives or Toys for Tots or the Ronald McDonald House. A tireless worker, Kathy is there for her consumers, no matter where: in the home or community; church; a picnic or volunteer work.

## Washington



**Allen Smith**, Creative Living Services/ResCare of Washington, does an admirable job of listening for what people really want and involving them in real conversation. Allen recognizes that choice

empowers people to live to their highest potential and encourages them to be as independent as possible. When one of Allen's consumers wanted to take a vacation, Allen rose to the occasion. Although visually impaired, his consumer wanted to drive down the Washington and Oregon coasts...to learn what kind of shortwave radio reception he could get! They carefully laid out plans, deciding how far to travel each day, where to stay and where to eat. The trip turned out to be a huge success. An added bonus, the shortwave radio reception was great.

## West Virginia



**Shari Rome Rogers** of ResCare North Central Agency is called the Pied Piper by her colleagues. Wherever she goes, her consumers will follow. A nurse by training, Shari became a DSP after she had a dream about working with disabled people. Her professionalism and tenacity propelled her into a management position, but Shari quickly insisted on a demotion. She missed being a DSP. By putting herself in their shoes, Shari fosters growth for her consumers. "If you have a consumer who likes music, but hates cleaning, say 'Let's go clean your room and listen to some country music.' You have to find out what they like and explore opportunities for growth."

## Wyoming



**Joann Candaleria** of Ark Regional Services made a conscious decision to give up her successful career as a store manager to become a DSP. Her focus is on DSP professionalism and Joann has an intense desire to further her own skills, plus "raise the bar" for the field as a whole. Joann uses verbal and non-verbal skills,

gestures and her history with her consumers to assure that they have the opportunity to be heard and to be listened to. She demonstrates an innate ability to know when and where people need support and when they are able to fare for themselves. Working with people with complex support needs, Joann encourages them to develop their capabilities and celebrate the intrinsic rewards of self-sufficiency.

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## Support DSPs! Support H.R. 1279!

No one can tell the story of the direct support workforce better than the DSPs themselves. The NAC slogan, "You Need to Know Me! I am a Direct Support Professional." succinctly sends the important message that failing to address the DSP workforce crisis is a detriment to our society at large. DSPs make a substantial difference in the quality of life for people with disabilities and other vulnerable citizens.

Unfortunately, the DSP workforce crisis is deepening. DSPs often cannot make a living on their wages, so turnover and vacancies are high (as high as 86 percent in some residential settings). The national average wage is \$9 an hour, putting unfair demands on workers already engaged in challenging and stressful work to take second jobs to feed their own families. DSP numbers can't match the growing demand for their services. By 2020, the number of individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities in need of residential, in-home and day supports is expected to rise from one million to 1.4 million, a 38 percent increase. Currently there are 875,000 direct support workers to support just this one segment of the disability population, but by 2020 demand will grow to at least 1.2 million workers.

The Direct Support Professionals Fairness and Security Act (H.R. 1279) now before Congress would provide states with an option for supplemental Medicaid funding needed to increase DSP wages. This legislation garnered 121 strong supporters in this 110th Congress, but more are needed. Contact your U.S. Representative to get behind this important legislation. Visit the Action Center at [www.ancor.org](http://www.ancor.org) today to find out if your member of Congress is a co-sponsor. If so, send your thanks. If not, request support for H.R. 1279. DSPs make a difference everyday. They deserve your support. Act today!

## DSPs to DC! Join us September 2008

Last year, more than 300 DSPs and their providers came to Washington to meet with their members of Congress and tell their stories about the DSP workforce crisis. The unparalleled success of that event guaranteed a repeat for 2008. Be sure to mark your calendar for DSPs to DC September 7-9. Participating DSPs will once again attend a continuing education class and receive advocacy training. There will be no registration fee for participating DSPs; but ANCOR members will be responsible for their own registration and DSP travel and lodging costs. Watch for email information from ANCOR in the coming month. The DSPs to DC event is a tremendous opportunity to build broader awareness on Capitol Hill and in the media about the direct support workforce crisis. Your participation will make a difference.



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