

A publication of the National
Alliance for Direct Support Professionals

Frontline Initiative

Volume 11 • Number 3 • 2013

Why DSP recognition matters

Organizational support, retention, and quality

By Carol Britton Laws

In my twenties I worked as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) in a residential program. I was challenged in good ways that made me better understand the kind of lives the people I supported wanted. But I was also challenged in very difficult ways that made me wonder why I was putting myself in uncomfortable situations at an unlivable

wage. I understood why the people I supported didn't always thank me for my efforts. There were times when I was an unwanted intrusion in their homes and lives in many ways. What was harder to understand was how unappreciated I felt by many of my co-workers and management. Fellow staff often became angry when I went 'above and beyond' for someone I supported. And the admin-

Continued on page 2

What's Inside

Joint ANCOR / AAIDD Webinar:
Communities growing through
direct support professionals • 2

Frontline notes • 3

NADSP update: Recognizing DSPs:
Past, present, and future • 4

Heidi Friedman: New York
State DSP of the Year • 5

Dimitru (Dima) Condratchi:
Massachusetts DSP of the Year • 6

Ignacio (Nash) Cantu:
Texas DSP of the Year • 7

Jeffrey Long: Florida DSP
of the Year • 8

Moving Mountains:
Recognizing and awarding best
practices in direct support • 9

Rosie Moriarity: ANCOR's 2013
DSP of the Year • 10

Promoting DSPs: The NADSP
Credentialing Program • 12

Starting a recognition program • 14

Every day ways to recognize DSPs
• 14

NADSP sponsoring, supporting
& affiliate organizations, state
chapters and contacts • 15

Congratulations Rosie Moriarity!

ANCOR DSP of the Year

The American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) has honored Rosie Moriarity of Living Well Disability Services (formerly Dakota Communities) in Eagan, Minnesota as the recipient of the 2013 National DSP Recognition Award. Rosie's work is particularly grounded in and reflective of the NADSP Competencies and Code of Ethics. See her story on page 10.



**Why DSP recognition matters:
Organizational support, retention and
quality** continued from page 1

istration didn't acknowledge the time and energy I consistently gave. Being a DSP sometimes felt like a thankless job. I don't think my experience is unique.

At the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP), we believe that the interaction between a DSP and a person receiving support is the most important measure of support quality. It is essential that provider organizations support DSPs to acquire the knowledge, skills and values necessary to have effective and ethical interactions. This means that organizations need to invest in their direct support workforce if they wish to be known for high quality supports. Organizations must also recognize DSPs' work as critically important to the entire organization. Too often the quality of support is lowered by poor staff preparation and little recognition for staff who do their work well.

There is a lot of research on the impending crisis in community-based long-term services and supports. We know there is high demand for DSPs and short supply, but we aren't sure how to address it. In my research on DSP retention I found that the most significant predictor of a low desire to quit was high job satisfaction. The factor that predicted job satisfaction was the amount of support DSPs felt they received from their organization. This means that when DSPs feel a high level of organizational support, they are more satisfied with their job and are less likely to leave. This is important because it shows that organizations can lower their staff attrition rates by providing DSPs with higher levels of support.

Provider organizations can increase the level of support provided to DSPs by recognizing their importance. This can come in many forms. One way to recognize DSPs is to promote a culture of competence. This means all DSPs are expected to demonstrate specific knowledge and skills on the job. This requires giving DSPs time on the clock to learn, practice and build confidence. Promoting a competent workforce helps close the performance gap between staff. It also encourages DSPs to have high quality interactions with the people they support. A second way to recognize DSPs is to increase hourly wages or provide a bonus to those who strive to improve. Additional compensation is important if DSPs are to view themselves as professionals who have valuable skills to offer. Finally it is essential for provider organizations to be outwardly grateful for good staff. Thanking DSPs both publicly and privately demonstrates to DSPs that their work is appreciated and their role in the organization is critical.

DSP Recognition Week begins September 8, 2013. Why not advocate for your organization to make September DSP recognition month? This is a great opportunity for organizations and communities to honor the DSP workforce. Even more, this is an opportunity for you to reflect on the important work you and your coworkers do every day. On behalf of the NADSP, thank you for all that you do. Go celebrate the immeasurable difference you are making on the lives of the people you support! You deserve it.

See Other Ways to Recognize Direct Support Professionals on page 14 of this issue for additional recognition ideas you might share with your organization. Join us in honoring DSPs and people who receive supports.

Carol Britton Laws, Ph.D. is the President of NADSP. She is also the Coordinator of Interdisciplinary Pre-Service Education at the Institute on Human Development and Disability at the University of Georgia. She can be reached at 706-542-9401 or CarolMBritton@gmail.com.

Joint ANCOR / AAIDD Webinar

Communities growing through direct support professionals

September 10, 2013 - 1:30 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. EST

Join Rosie Moriarty, ANCOR DSP of the Year, and Jennifer Quimby, Alaska DSP of the Year, for an informative and insightful webinar on the role of Direct Support Professionals.

They'll discuss how DSPs are assisting people with disabilities, and how we can all work together to gain the recognition we deserve.

Access this webcast and many more great resources in the online Education Archive of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD):

http://aidd.org/education/education-archive#.Ui9qhHCD_N4

Frontline notes

Welcome to the DSP Recognition Issue of *Frontline Initiative*. This issue celebrates Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) in connection with the sixth consecutive *National DSP Recognition Week*, starting September 8, 2013. The U.S. Senate has designated this week, where special events and ceremonies are earmarked to honor us. As Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) stated: "Families across America depend on the hard work of DSPs who provide an invaluable service to millions living with disabilities, seniors, and people with chronic conditions. I am proud to honor these men and women who do so much to improve their clients' quality of life and keep community bonds strong." Read more at <http://www.nationaladvocacycampaign.org/>.

On June 11, 2013 the NADSP board of directors elected a new slate of officers to lead the organization. The officers will continue the mission to enhance quality of supports for people with disabilities by working to elevate the status of DSPs, promote systems reform, and advance our knowledge, skills, and values in the field. Please join us in welcoming Dr. Carol Britton Laws as our President of NADSP. In the cover story, Carol describes her personal journey in direct support. Learn why she is a great leader and driven to discover ways to support all DSPs.

At this year's *American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)* conference, 45 DSPs of the Year were honored as state award recipients. These DSPs were publicly recognized for

their provision of excellent supports. Each winner is highlighted in the ANCOR LINKS newsletter: http://www.ancor.org/sites/default/files/pdf/links_2013-04-05.pdf. In this issue, you'll find interviews with several of these skillful and deserving DSPs, thanks to our thoughtful and dedicated Editorial Board members.

Part of recognizing the DSP workforce is providing education and training to further careers and improve supports to people with disabilities. Learn how you can become a part of this growing movement. Check out information on the NADSP credentialing program and special discounts offered in the month of September! Read on about the *Moving Mountains Award*; and join us in congratulating the *Anderson Center for Autism*. Learn how this model organization has improved the competence, status, compensation, and stability of DSPs.

We encourage you to think about what recognition means to you. In this issue you can explore some creative and fun ways that organizations have successfully used to start a recognition program with and for DSPs. You can find a list of ideas to recognize DSPs every day. Be inspired to recognize your colleagues, make changes in your organization, and advocate for policies or legislation to promote the DSP workforce.

Congratulations to all DSPs – for the hard work you do and all that you bring to your community by supporting people with disabilities! Let us all recognize our own value and those we support.

Editorial information

Editor Annie Johnson Sirek

Assistant editor Jennifer Reinke

Managing editor Lori Sedlezky

Graphic design Connie Burkhardt

Web www.nadsp.org

Editorial board Tony Anderson, Mike Bray, Lisa Burck, Susan Copeland, Kristine Foss, Richard Garnett, Tom Harmon, Susan Jakoblew, Mary Lawson, Joseph Macbeth, Lori Raymond, Courtney Swilley

NADSP Staff

Joseph Macbeth, Executive Director
Lisa Mount, Office Manager

NADSP Board of Directors

Dr. Carol Britton Laws, President
Kristin Dean, Vice President
Julie Price, Treasurer/Secretary
Lisa Burck, Past President
Don Carrick, At-Large
David Liscomb, At-Large
Jerri McCandless, At-Large
Tony Thomas, At-Large
Janet Wilson, At-Large

NADSP Foundation Board of Directors

Lisa Burck
John Rose
Tony Thomas

Contribute to *Frontline Initiative*

If you are interested in contributing to *Frontline Initiative* or reprinting an article, please contact —

Annie Johnson Sirek
Research and Training Center
on Community Living
Phone: 612-626-0535
E-mail: joh02055@umn.edu

Frontline Initiative is supported through a cooperative agreement between the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education (#H133B080005) and the Research and Training Center on Community Living (RTC) at the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the RTC, Institute, University of Minnesota, or their funding sources.

Frontline Initiative is available in alternate formats upon request.

NADSP update

Recognizing DSPs: Past, present, and future

By Joseph Macbeth

First of all, on behalf of the NADSP's staff and board of directors, I'd like to thank our nation's Direct Support Workforce for their commitment and dedication to people with disabilities. Moreover, I'd like to recognize the complex skills and professional values it requires to be an effective Direct Support Professional (DSP) – one of the most challenging, yet rewarding occupations in the country. I hope all of you receive the due recognition you deserve during *National Direct Support Professional Recognition Week* and that you take a moment to reflect on the incredible impact you have on the lives and personal outcomes of the people you support.

I have the honor of talking with thousands of DSPs each year, many of whom tell me that they don't really need any formal recognition. They tell me that they get a sense of deep personal satisfaction that comes from some internal source for helping others on their life journeys. I suspect for some DSPs that this might be true, but everyone appreciates a look in the eye, a handshake (or a hug) and a heartfelt "thank you" from a supervisor, a family member or (especially) someone with a disability who is receiving support.

Since the deinstitutionalization movement of the 1970's, the duties of the DSP has evolved from that of a caretaker or an attendant who merely provided coverage on a shift, to someone who is an integral part of a person life that provides comprehensive, person-

centered support and shares a path toward a self-directed life for those with disabilities. The way others see DSPs has also changed during these forty years, and I believe that if we are going to continue sharing this path, then DSPs will have to become really good at connecting with community in all aspects of a person's

Reflect on the incredible impact you have on the lives and personal outcomes of the people you support.

life – home, work, play and worship (if he or she chooses). As it says in the prelude to our Code of Ethics: "The whole landscape of a person's life can change with the coming and going of these critical supports for people."

The United States is in the process of reforming the larger task of the healthcare industry, which includes services for individuals with developmental disabilities. Through the untiring work of self-advocates, families, DSPs, service provider agencies, and public policy makers, a largely institutional care system has been turned on its head by developing a myriad of community-based supports and service options over the past four decades. Now we must demonstrate leadership by preserving and advancing the successes of

the past by embracing our work of direct support as a profession and attracting new generations of men and women who seek it as a career.

So, if we are to really meet the needs of people with disabilities, DSPs will require a *lot* more than recognition. We are going to need tools to be effective community builders. We need to possess the skills to work without a supervisor standing nearby and understand professional ethics to do the right thing when no one else is looking.

How are we going to do this? Let's continue to collaborate and work to achieve our goals in the following ways —

- Provide competency-based training to all staff;
- Use technology that affords DSPs more time to spend working directly with the people they support;
- Embrace, train and adhere to the Code of Ethics;
- Advance a voluntary, portable national credential as the gold standard of direct support practice; and
- Collect and evaluate workforce data, such as retention and turnover rates, worker wages, benefits, and training so that we can monitor our progress, learn from our experiences, and continue to develop good workforce policy going forward.

Joseph Macbeth is the Executive Director of NADSP. He can be reached at jmacbeth@nadsp.org or 518-449-7551.

Heidi Friedman

New York State DSP of the Year

Heidi: I work for *The Arc of Delaware County*, which is located in Arkville, New York, in the Catskill Mountain Region of the state. I've been with the agency for seven years and work as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) doing community inclusion activities. My official title is Life Coach VII.

FI: Why did you win the DSP award in your state?

I was nominated for the 2013 ANCOR Award because of my relationships with the folks I support, innovations, creativity and dedication.

Describe your best day on the job

The best day on the job is when someone I support smiles. When I know that I just made a difference that affected another person in a positive way, knowing that they trust me and want to be with me. It's all about making another person feel worth. When the people I support look at me and say, "Thank you! Have a good weekend. I'm happy because..., or I'm sad because..." that's a forever connection and a wonderful day.

What have you learned from people you support?

The answer is simple - patience. Patience to listen, patience to wait for successes. When people I support do a task on their own and feel the pure joy of independence, the power is theirs forever. They know they can accomplish new and harder tasks, and they can conquer many more challenges.



What have you learned from other DSPs?

Teamwork. It's important that everyone works together to achieve the same goal. Each person brings his or her own set of unique gifts and talents to the team, and putting them all together is what makes us work.

What has changed in the field since you started?

Here at *The Arc of Delaware County* everything begins with Person-Centered Planning. This involves discovering what folks want out of life, and then helping to make it happen. This is a fantastic shift that our organization has taken over the years. Not just having meetings, but involving each person supported in the planning meetings, assessments and discussions. Everything we do is person-centered, and based on the desires of the individuals. Sometimes we can jump right in and help them accomplish it, and sometimes there are situa-

tions when lots of small steps are needed to reach the goal.

Please share more insights

Being a DSP has made such a difference in my life. It can make a difference in your life also. If you are not sure exactly sure what being a DSP is all about, go to www.delarc.org and take the time to find out. When you watch Gerry do his impression of Jackie Gleason, or Kelly as she dances to Thriller, you can't help but be mesmerized by their talent and passion. The people we support are exactly like everybody else, in the sense that we are all unique individuals.

Heidi Friedman can be contacted at the Arc of Delaware County at delarc@delarc.org. For more information about the Arc of Delaware County, go to www.delarc.org.

Dimitru (Dima) Condratchi

Massachusetts DSP of the Year

Dima: I work at Work, Community, and Independence (WCI) in Waltham, Massachusetts. I began working as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) in October 2009. I am originally from Eastern Europe and worked as a lawyer there.

FI: Why did you win the DSP award in your state?

I believe I won the award for DSP because I was able to advocate for the people I have supported in several ways. For example, I have helped some individuals lose a considerable amount of weight, and I have helped one person I support get social security. I also advocated for human rights and privacy. I was able to assist the people I support during a fire emergency. I managed to support them all in evacuating safely, and helped them to recover from the traumatic experience. I continued to support them as needed throughout the transition. I was promoted to the position of Entitlement Coordinator in my agency.

What have you learned as a DSP?

I learned quite a bit being a DSP. I had never done any of this work previously and the trainings at my agency helped me a lot. It was a lot of information to absorb but I found it helpful.



Please share more insights

As a DSP, I always kept in mind that I wanted to treat the people I was supporting how I would want my family to be treated.

What are others saying?

ANCOR and WCI: The individuals Dima supports have complex medical needs, require much physical assistance, and are wheelchair dependent. Dima does not believe their physical impairments are barriers to experiencing the same activities enjoyed by non-disabled people. He helps them experience life through their other senses and is passionate in advocating for their full participation in social and community activities...

Recently, Dima was promoted and the day before he was to begin his new job, a serious fire

occurred at the home where he works, forcing the evacuation and relocation of the residents to new, temporary quarters. His response to the fire crisis is a clear example of his proficiency. He calmly and efficiently led the staff in the immediate evacuation of the home. He completed arrangements for hotel accommodations, and ensured that all supportive devices, clothing and comfort items, and medications were in place.

Dima Condratchi can be contacted at WCI at 781-899-8220. For more information about WCI, go to <http://www.wearewci.org/>



Ignacio (Nash) Cantu

Texas DSP of the Year



Nash: I am a Direct Support Professional (DSP) with *Mosaic* in Dallas, Texas. I have been a DSP for two years.

FI: Why did you win the DSP award in your state?

I was surprised to have been selected Texas DSP of the Year for 2013. I believe I won the award partly for my ability to communicate with everyone well and my desire to make a difference. My supervisor felt that I do particularly well in what she described as the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) Competency Area #13 – Building and Maintaining Friendships and Relationships.

I support three men in their 40's and 50's who are roommates living in their own apartment. At one point, I took time to introduce the men I work with to their neighbors in other apartments and helped them develop friendships. I

have worked hard to expand their circle of supports and friendships by teaching them what it is like to be a friend and to have a friend.

What do you like about being a DSP?

If I were asked what a great day is in working for *Mosaic*, I would say it feels like every day is a great day in my work. I enjoy what I do. I spend a lot of time going into the community so that the men I support can experience meaningful lives with others. I share my belief that we are all just people and none of us are defined by our disabilities.

I try to encourage the people I support to participate in community activities so they can learn different things and meet people. We attend monthly birthday parties at church, go roller skating, hang out with friends and generally enjoy being out in the community. I get to know what their interests are and what they enjoy. If they like sports, cooking, art, music, or community activities, I try to take time so that each person does get to do something important to them. I see how I can make a difference in their lives and give a voice to their needs and the needs of other people with disabilities.

What have you learned as a DSP?

I feel like I am growing as a DSP and continue to learn how to be better at what I do. My identity as a DSP is getting stronger and I have learned that the NADSP is an organization that can help me in my professional development. I have learned also that there are DSPs like me all over the country. Eventually I want to be a Social Worker in this field.

What are others saying?

Representative Kenny Marchant, TX: Thanks to Nash's incredible work, the people he supports have a greater opportunity to participate and contribute in their community. I am extremely grateful to have Nash as a constituent and am very proud to recognize his devoted service to the people of my district and the state of Texas... We must always honor those who devote themselves to enriching the lives of others.

Nash Cantu can be contacted at Mosaic at 972-866-9989. For more information about Mosaic, go to <http://www.mosaicinfo.org/dallas/>.



Jeffrey Long

Florida DSP of the Year

Jeffrey: I started out as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) in 1995 in Kentucky. Since then I have worked in several different settings. I'm currently the supervisor for a day program in Clearwater, FL called ResCare. Along with my team, I supervise the day habilitation program for 18 individuals with a range of abilities.

FI: What do you like about being a DSP?

Over the years I've come to realize that working with people with developmental disabilities is really my mission in life. The pay isn't always great, but I truly enjoy the work. Seeing the people that I support leave at the end of the day with a smile on their faces, knowing that I helped them progress in some way, is what makes it all worthwhile.

What have you learned from the people you support?

I've learned a lot from the people I support. The biggest thing I've learned is that it is important to think outside of the box. It is important to really listen to the people we support and try to hear the why of what they are saying, not just the words themselves. For example, if someone with a disability says he wants to learn to drive, then it is important to figure out what it is about driving that he likes. Does he really want to learn to drive? Or is it that he just likes cars? Or that he wants to take a trip? Once we know why someone is asking for something,

then we can figure out how to support that person's dream.

Another thing I've learned is to pay close attention to the people we support. We have to give them opportunities throughout the day to talk. And we have to listen without interrupting. If I see someone getting upset, I ask the person to come into my office. We sit down and I let the person talk about what is upsetting him or her. I just listen and make sure the person knows I am taking him or her seriously. With people who don't speak, I watch their body movements and facial expression to try and understand what they are wanting or needing.

What has changed in the field since you started?

The field has changed since I started in 1995. People with disabilities have more opportunities now to be included in the community. They have more choice and freedom about what they want to do. These are good things. I make sure that they have input into their habilitation plans and the activities that are planned. I spend time with every person helping them understand what their habilitation plans are. I help them understand their choices so they can put into the plan what they really want.

Please share more insights

My advice for anyone in our field is to invest yourself in each individual you support. You have to build up that relationship; build trust. A lot of staff come and go in the lives of people with disabilities.

That can make it hard for them to trust. So it is really important to create a solid, positive relationship so they know you can be counted on. Then, if someone gets upset, he or she will know that you can be trusted. That alone can help people calm down when they are upset.

One of the things I would love to see for our field is a national conference for DSPs. Having the chance to talk to other people who have the same kind of job you do would be helpful. A conference would be a great place for DSPs to regenerate, recharge, and get new ideas from each other.

What are others saying?

ANCOR and ResCare: Jeffrey's focus is on having those he supports become active in the community. Jeffrey created a bowling league and also coordinates weekly shopping trips, library visits, religious worship and visits with family and guardians. He's always looking for community events and is mindful of the educational aspects of the experiences. He also created a sensory room for relaxation... Jeffrey is a DSP of many talents!

Jeffrey Long can be contacted at ResCare at jlong@rescare.com. For more information about ResCare, go to www.rescare.com



Moving Mountains

Recognizing and awarding best practices in direct support

The intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) field is experiencing deep budget cuts and serious struggles in retaining quality staff. Despite these barriers there are a number of organizations that utilize best practices in direct support. The *National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP)* and the *University of Minnesota Research and Training Center (UofM RTC)* recognize these leading programs with the *Moving Mountains* award. Winning organizations or programs embrace direct support workforce practices that align with the NADSP's guiding principles. For more information on the NADSP guiding principles go to <https://nadsp.org/about/guiding-principles.html>.

2013 Moving Mountains Award winner, Anderson Center for Autism, Staatsburg, New York

We are pleased to recognize the winner of the 2013 Moving Mountains award, the *Anderson Center for Autism (ACA)*. Located in Staatsburg, New York, ACA offers all agency staff professional development opportunities through the ACA Career Ladder Learn and Earn Program. ACA created the Career Ladder Learn and Earn Program to support their mission and promise of serving people with ASD and developmental disabilities with the highest level of respect, integrity and competence available. It is ACA's philosophy that a highly trained and educated workforce will have the ability to provide a higher quality

of care, create stronger and more meaningful loyal relationships, and provide an environment that encourages learning. Through the ACA Career Ladder Learn and Earn Program, DSPs are encouraged, supported, and compensated for increasing their skills and developing a broad knowledge base necessary to perform at the highest possible proficiency level.

When the program began in 2002, the average number of college credits for a DSP working at ACA was 15. In 2008, the average number of college credits grew to 38. Now, the average number of college credits for the DSP at ACA is 52. ACA strives to support staff in educating themselves to participate at levels that are more sophisticated and to build careers that they will look back upon and say, "It started at Anderson and I am proud of my accomplishments." For more information on the ACA Career Learn and Earn Program, visit <http://www.andersoncenterforautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Learn-and-Earn.pdf>. Congratulations, ACA, for winning the 2013 Moving Mountains award!

Looking ahead to 2014!

Moving Mountains award recipients like ACA have taken the lead in improving the competence, status, compensation, and stability of the direct support workforce. They have shown that they value input from DSPs, self-advocates, and family members in developing their programs and initiatives. These organizations recognize their DSPs as valuable assets. NADSP and the UofM RTC, in turn, recognize these organizations by presenting them with a Moving Mountains award at the biennial Reinventing Quality Conference.

For information on the 2014 Reinventing Quality conference, stay tuned to <http://www.reinventingquality.org/upcoming/>. To learn more about applying for the Moving Mountains award view previous recipients, visit <https://nadsp.org/moving-mountains/about-moving-mountains.html>. Applications for the 2014 Moving Mountains award will be posted soon.

This article was adapted with permission from Desjardins, J. (2008). Moving Mountains: NADSP Recognizes Best Practice. *Frontline Initiative*, 8(1), 6.



Rosie Moriarity

ANCOR's 2013 DSP of the Year

by Tom King

When you ask Rosie Moriarty to describe herself, she does not hesitate: "I'm short and I'm sassy." Well, from now on she will have to add a few more words to her answer — "I'm short and sassy and I'm the 2013 National Direct Support Professional (DSP) of the Year."

Indeed she is. Rosie was selected for this prestigious national honor by ANCOR's Selection Committee as part of its annual DSP Recognition Contest.

"I was stunned, completely speechless when I was told," Rosie said. "To be speechless for me doesn't happen very often. It is humbling and you can't imagine how special this is to me."

Rosie, a DSP for 25 years who also is an LPN for Living Well Disability Services (formerly Dakota Communities) in Eagan, MN, is a Personal Advocate DSP. She supports Melanie Kett, who for 30 years has had Multiple Sclerosis (MS). In 2005 the MS became more serious and "Miss Mel" — as Rosie calls her — needed someone to move into her home in Mendota Heights for 24/7/365 supports. These two had been friends for 9 ½ years before Melanie's condition worsened, and when Rosie was asked if she would move in and live with Melanie and support her, she never hesitated. Not for one second.

"We are companions, we are dear friends and sometimes we're even sisters," Rosie said about their relationship. "Maybe soul mates. By the way, Mel is short



Mel and Rosie

and sassy too."

"Yep, we're both very short and very sassy.... and we proudly do that," Mel said. "And Rosie is wonderful — just wonderful."

Erica Cournoyer, a Program Coordinator, is Rosie's direct supervisor at Living Well and understands and knows their relationship perhaps better than anyone. "They are girlfriends. They laugh. They cry. They inspire one another," Erica said. "Rosie lives to love the people who are around her. She is a strong woman. She surrounds herself with people and she embraces them as friends. She is very, very compassionate and has a wonderful spirit about her. I've always said that Rosie plans things and does things to live for the day."

This close relationship probably saved Melanie's life. "It was on September 3, 2008. I got up at 5:30 a.m. and I felt like something was just not right, that something was wrong with Mel," Rosie recalls. "I went into her bedroom and she was just lying there and it looked like she'd had a stroke. She

was unresponsive with tremors and had facial drooping and she was turning blue. Her fists were balled up in an abnormal position. I called 911 as fast as I could."

Melanie had a massive seizure, her first ever, and in the emergency room she was placed on a ventilator and survived. "I just sensed that something was wrong. I could feel it and I'm that much in tune with her. I have the same bond with her that I had with my son when he lived at home. Yes, I probably did save her life that morning."

Rosie has a 37-year-old son, Miguel, with an intellectual disability who now lives in St. Cloud, MN, in supported housing. Everyone calls him "Nooners." For many years she was his DSP at their home.

Melanie has two adult children she stays in contact with — a son in Minnesota and a daughter who lives in Israel with her husband. "We Skype a lot," Rosie says. "There's not much we don't do."

In addition to being Melanie's support person, Rosie also is an

LPN for Living Well. checking meds and making sure everything is up to date and correct in the ordering and the distribution of the meds.

The MS ended Melanie's budding musical career. She was a professional viola player and played in both the St. Paul Symphony and the Hawaiian National Symphony. The MS took from her the muscles needed to play the viola.

Rosie enjoys telling anyone about her buddy Mel. "She's vibrant and energetic and has a smile that's out of this world. She loves food and I love to cook so that's a perfect match. She loves babies and animals. Mel is very smart. I'd call her an intellectual. She loves music and the theater and is a real people person. We're starting a Red Hat Club and inviting people with and without disabilities. Mel works as a Wal-Mart greeter, too."

Antonia Gillen, who nominated Rosie for this award, is Director of Community Life at Living Well. "Rosie is the kind of person who if you bottled up her energy and sold it, you'd be a millionaire," she said. "I have never met anyone anywhere who is so positive and full of sunshine. Rosie keeps the spark of life going for Mel through trips and friends and activities and she can maintain that level of energy for 24 hours every day. She is simply amazing."

This is not Rosie's first honor. In 2009 she won the ARRM Cares Award as the DSP of the Year for Minnesota. In 1989 she received the Exceptional Parent award from the Minnesota Council of Exceptional Children.

The *Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities* was formed 25 years ago and created a ground-breaking and innovative training program called "Partners in Policy Making." Its mission was to teach

self-advocates, parents and DSPs the power of advocacy to change the way people with disabilities are supported, viewed by the public, taught, live and work. She was selected to be in that very first class and has been a fierce advocate ever since.

"Rosie and Mel continue to use the tools from this training as they meet with their state representatives several times a year to lobby for budget changes and the preservation of services, and together they participate in forums to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities," Antonia said. She described them as "fixtures" at the state capitol advocating for people with disabilities.

"This is where the sassy part of me comes in handy," Rosie said. "Miss Mel as well."

These ladies love to take vacations together, but Rosie has to drive because Melanie can't fly now. They went on a family vacation to Washington, D.C. a few years back and something difficult yet interesting happened that illustrates Rosie's grit and determination. Let's let her tell the story:

"We got to the hotel and I plugged in Mel's motorized chair so it would charge up. Then we turned the lights out and went to bed. The next morning after we were out seeing the sights the chair stopped working. I pushed her all over D.C. in that chair so we wouldn't miss anything. It was about 500 pounds of pushing. I was exhausted. That night I discovered that the plug I used was tied to the light switch and when I turned the lights off the plug didn't work. Never again will I make that mistake."

In nominating Rosie, here are some of Antonia's key remarks —

- "Finding that perfect balance of friend and advocate is a gift that Rosie has been able to achieve with Melanie as her live-in pro-

vider."

- "She has encouraged Melanie to maintain physical, mental, and spiritual opportunities that are essential to a whole life for her, regardless of her disability."
- "Rosie is not only a leader in the field of Direct Support, but an innovator in how to provide services to people while maintaining their life in their own home and community. She has married her passions for advocacy and her current profession as a nurse to not only maintain Melanie's presence in her own home, but to proactively address the health issues that are caused by Multiple Sclerosis."
- "And while you can point to all of the rules and regulations that prove how proficient Rosie is in her position as a Direct Support Professional, you only have to look at the smile on Melanie's face over coffee with their friends on the weekend to understand exactly what they both mean to each other."

If you visit their home, you would be struck by what you find. Since the 6th grade Rosie has collected elephants of all kinds from as far away as Thailand, New Zealand and Ireland. "I love elephants. They're caring and gentle and their families come first always," she says. "They have human qualities. I have about 600 of them everywhere in the house."

Mel loves Rosie's elephants, but Rosie says that she collects Betty Boops, the animated cartoon character. "Mel calls herself a Boop-A-holic," Rosie added. "Elephants and Betty Boop are just part of who are."

Reprinted with permission. King, T. (2013, April-May). ANCOR's 2013 DSP of the year, Rosie Moriarity. *ANCOR Links*, 43(10), 8-9.

Tom King is a free-lance writer, living in Knoxville, TN. You can reach him at 865-659-3562 or via email at tking535@gmail.com

Promoting DSPs

The NADSP Credentialing Program

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) play an important role in the lives of individuals and the community. This work requires an advanced level of skills, knowledge, and abilities to do well. Competency-based training and other professional development opportunities can help DSPs provide quality and effective supports to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

The *National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP)* has developed a national credentialing program for DSPs working in community-based human services. The purpose of this credentialing program is to provide national recognition for the contributions and competence of DSPs who apply for and meet the credentialing standards.

Benefits of Credentialing

Credentialed DSPs feel valued and take pride in their direct support work.

Credentialed DSPs have greater employment opportunities, job security, and promotions.

Certifications are portable —DSPs moving to a different region bring their certifications with them and do not have to demonstrate or re-document their competence simply because they have moved.

People outside the field of community human services will see direct support work as an authentic profession with a career path.

Employers will see an increase in the consistency of high quality supports delivered by credentialed DSPs.

Individuals receiving support services will lead higher quality lives because DSPs will have the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to support individuals' preferences and personal goals.

NADSP DSP credential

The NADSP credentialing program affords DSPs the opportunity to commit to the profession of direct support through its three-tiered credential program (Registered, Certified, and Specialty levels):

DSP-R (registered level)

- Complete all mandatory state and agency training requirements

This is the first level of credential offered. The DSP-R is intended to recognize people who have entered the profession and desire to have careers in the field of community human services.

DSP-I (certified initial level)

- Total training hours: 100 (cumulative from DSP-R)
- Total on-the-job learning hours: 1,500
- Submit portfolio work samples based on 4 competency areas (see page 13)

DSP-II (certified advanced level)

- Total training hours: 200
- Total on-the-job learning hours: 3,000
- Submit portfolio work samples based on 4 or more competency areas

The certified levels of credentialing recognize DSPs who have demonstrated competence that is measured and approved by the NADSP. These credentials set this group of DSPs apart from other DSPs in that they have demonstrated skills that typical entry level DSPs would not have acquired.



DSP – III (certified specialist level)

- Total training hours: 240 (cumulative from previous)
- Submit 6 portfolio work samples demonstrating competencies in specialty area

There are six specialist areas in which DSPs can seek credentialing —

1. Positive Behavioral Support (DSP-S-PBS)
2. Health Support (DSP-S-HS)
3. Inclusion (DSP-S-I)
4. Supervision & Mentoring (DSP-S-MS)
5. Employment Supports (DSP-S-ES)
6. Aging Supports (DSP-S-AS)

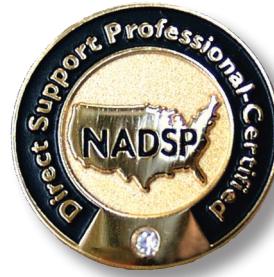
The specialist certificate is designed to recognize DSPs who have obtained specialized training and have demonstrated competence in providing specialized support to individuals with disabilities in community human services.

Competency areas

- Participant Empowerment
- Communication
- Assessment
- Community and Service Networking
- Facilitation of Services
- Community Living Skills & Supports
- Education, Training, & Self-Development
- Advocacy
- Vocational, Educational, & Career Support
- Crisis Prevention & Intervention
- Organizational Participation
- Documentation
- Building and Maintaining Friendships and Relationships
- Provide Person-Centered Supports
- Supporting Health and Wellness

For more information

For information about the NADSP DSP Credentialing program, go to <https://nadsp.org/dsp-credentialing/about-dsp-credentialing.html>



Special discounts in the month of September!

In honor of National Direct Support Professional Recognition Week, the NADSP has announced a promotion throughout the month of September that offers organizations a significant discount for group registrations of direct support professionals as DSP-Rs — the first step to a nationally recognized credential in direct support practice. Don't miss this opportunity — start working NOW!

The DSP-R is intended to recognize those who have entered the profession and desire to have careers in the field of community human services. This first level is not intended to be a credential for which NADSP prescribes or sanctions DSP competence — it meets the basic requirements to be placed on our national DSP Registry.

- 1–10 **DSP-R** applications: \$45 per DSP
- 11–25 **DSP-R** applications: \$40 per DSP
- 26–50 **DSP-R** applications: \$35 per DSP
- More than 50 **DSP-R** applications: \$30 per DSP

(Our standard DSP-R application fee is \$50 per DSP.)

Learn more at <https://nadsp.org/dsp-credentialing/dsp-registered.html>

Adapted with permission from the *NADSP E-flash* (sent July 23, 2013).

Starting a recognition program

Recognition programs have a positive impact on both Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and employers. In addition to increasing DSPs' job satisfaction, the programs can increase DSPs' sense of professional identity and pride in working for a particular organization. DSPs who receive merit bonuses or service awards as part of the programs are more likely to plan on staying in their jobs for years to come. These are some of the lessons that we learned from Dr. John Sherlock's project with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

If you are starting a recognition program, take our advice: Involve DSPs in designing the program. It is important for employers to con-

sider these guidelines to increase their likelihood of success —

- Involve DSPs in selecting the awards.
- Hold organizational events where DSPs can gather and be recognized in front of their peers and family members.
- Remember the costs of a recognition program will typically be much less than the high cost of unwanted turnover.
- Establish and communicate upfront the criteria that will be used for recognition awards, such as attendance.
- Think creatively about the possible awards. Organizations might consider tangible items, such as

a fleece jacket or pins, in addition to other kinds of rewards, such as paid time-off, based on years of service.

- Reward years of service with increasingly valuable awards to show the value you place on your DSPs' loyalty to the organization.
- Enter a recognition program with the understanding that everything won't go perfectly; you may have to make adjustments as you proceed. That's OK—the DSPs will appreciate your efforts to recognize them!

Adapted with permission from Sherlock, J. J. (2008). An employee recognition program designed by direct support professionals. *Frontline Initiative*, 8(1), 10.

Every day ways to recognize DSPs

Celebrating DSP Recognition Week is a great opportunity to honor DSPs and the tremendous difference we make. Here are some ideas of ways to celebrate every day —

- Hold a staff appreciation lunch, barbecue or ice cream social.
- Have executive and management staff work side-by-side a DSP for a day. Learn what they do and ask them questions about their work.
- Recognize "Excellence in Direct Support Practice" and give examples and formal recognition of a DSP who helped someone "have a great life".
- Give a small, but meaningful and personalized gift.
- Provide a heartfelt and simple "thank you" for the personal

sacrifices that DSPs make on a regular basis.

- Bring in dinner, lunch or breakfast for those who are working in your programs.
- Drive-by and Drop Ins: Surprise the morning shift with a bag of bagels and a box of coffee, or some special refreshments and some festivities.
- Create and distribute a DSP Week flyer/press release to raise awareness of the important contributions that DSPs have in the lives of people with disabilities.
- Invite elected officials to your organization's homes and let DSPs tell their stories to them.
- Write a Letter to the Editor of your local newspaper that describes the complex and skilled work that your DSPs do every day.

- Find ways that your organization's culture can show that you trust DSPs - invite them to join committees, seek their input on strategic planning, use their expertise.
- Seek out a local radio talk shows or news segments to showcase the skills of DSPs and the impact they have on positive outcomes for people with disabilities.
- Help the people with disabilities who receive services to express their thanks by sponsoring celebrations, buying gift baskets and writing cards of appreciation.
- Make sure that the families of those you support know that it's DSP Recognition Week and ask them to get involved.

Adapted with permission from the NADSP E-flash (sent July 23, 2013)

NADSP sponsoring, supporting & affiliate organizations, state chapters and contacts

Member organizations, state chapters, and contacts

We would like to acknowledge NADSP Supporting Organization members for their generosity and ongoing dedication to the goals and mission of NADSP.

Sponsoring organizations

- American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)
- Crystal Run Village, Inc.
- Homeplace Support Services
- Koinonia Homes, Inc.
- NYSACRA
- NYSARC, Inc.
- Provider Search, LLC
- Research & Training Center at the University of Minnesota
- Welcome House, Inc.

Supporting organizations

- AHRC NYC
- Anderson Center for Autism
- Apple Patch Community
- The Adirondack Arc
- The Arc of Rensselaer County
- The Arc of Tennessee
- Block Institute
- Bost, Inc.
- Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities
- Cardinal Hayes Home for Children
- Cardinal McCloskey Community Services
- Catholic Charities Disabilities Services
- Cedar Lake, Inc.
- Cerebral Palsy Association of New York State

- COARC, Inc.
- Community Bridges NH, Inc.
- Grace Community Services
- Greystone Programs
- Hammer Residences
- Hope House Foundation
- ICES, Inc.
- Jefferson Rehab
- Job Path, Inc.
- Larry McKinstry Services, LLC
- Laura Baker Services Association
- Mercy Home
- Monarch, Inc.
- NASDDDS, Inc.
- New Hope Community
- New Horizons Resources
- OAHE, Inc.
- Opportunity Enterprises
- Orange AHRC, NY
- Outreach MRDD Services
- Pathfinder Services
- Residential Resources
- The Resource Center, Inc.
- SECOH, Inc.
- Services for the Underserved
- SPEAK (KY)
- SPIN, Inc.
- Stone Belt Arc, Inc

Affiliate members

- Adults and Children with Learning and Developmental Disabilities
- ADVANTAGE Healthcare Provider

- ARC Broward
- The Arc of Southside
- Cardinal Services
- Citizen Advocates, Inc.
- Community Support Services Inc.
- The Council on Quality & Leadership (CQL)
- DDI
- Eggleston Services
- Epilepsy Foundation of Long Island
- Haitian Americans United for Progress, Inc.
- Hampton Newport News Community Services Board
- Hope Association, Inc.
- Hopewell Center
- Life's WORC
- McComb Consulting & Government Relations
- Miami Cerebral Palsy Residential Services
- Regis Obijiski
- OPG, Inc.
- Parent to Parent of New York State (NYS)
- Passages, Inc.
- Pennsylvania Advocacy & recourse for Autism & Intellectual Disabilities (PAR)
- Presbyterian Homes & Family Services
- Rural Living Environments
- RWJMS/UMDNJ-The Boggs Center
- Self Advocacy Association of NYS
- St. Amant Community Residential Program
- Thumbs Up
- Wabash Center, Inc.
- West Side Support Services
- Whole Life, Inc.
- WillGlo Services, Inc

State chapters and contacts

As a membership organization, NADSP requires the involvement of its members to share information on DSP issues, achievements and directions. Chapters and contacts do this important work in concert with NADSP. We encourage the involvement and participation of DSPs in leadership roles at both the local and national levels.

Arizona

DSPs of Arizona
Michelle Noe
dsp@dsparizona.com
www.dsparizona.org

Arkansas

Vanessa Smith
SmithVanessa@uams.edu

California,

Tony Anderson
The Arc of California
tony@thearc.ca.org

Connecticut

Kristine E. Foss
kfoss@abilitybeyonddisability.org

Florida

Florida Alliance for DSPs
cswilley@floridaarf.org

Georgia

Georgia Alliance of DSPs
Joy Eason Hopkins
joyeasonhopkins@gmail.com
www.gadsp.com

Hawaii

Hawaii Alliance for Direct Support Professionals
Nancy Atmospera-Walch
walchnancy@yahoo.com

Illinois

Illinois DSPs
Dawn Kellogg
idsprotim@idspros.org
www.idspros.org

Indiana

DSPIN
Elizabeth Patel, INARF
elizabeth@inarf.org

Kansas

Kathy Stiffler
KLStiffler@rsskansas.org

Kentucky

SPEAK
Cheryl Prusinski
cprusinski@sevencounties.org

Louisiana

Nancy Robertson
504.942.8289

Michigan

Michigan Alliance of DSPs (MADSP)
Michael Bray
mikebray@wayne.edu

www.ddi.wayne.edu/michigan_alliance.php

Minnesota

DSP Association of Minnesota (DSPAM)
Bridget Siljander, President
bridgetsiljander@yahoo.com

Mississippi

Support Professionals Advocating for Real Quality of Life for Everyone (SPARQE)
Lisa Burck
lburck@nadsp.org

Missouri

DSPs of Missouri
Don Carrick
dcarrick@nadsp.org

Nebraska

NDSPN
Mary Lawson
Nebraskadsp@gmail.com

New Hampshire

Robin Carlson
carlet@metrocast.net

New Jersey

Colleen McLaughlin
Colleen.mclaughlin@umdnj.edu

New Mexico

www.nmdirectsupport.org

New York

DSP Alliance of New York State (DSPANYS)
Michael Tuggey
tuggeyadk@yahoo.com
directsupportprofessional.org

North Carolina

Kelly Bohlander
Kelly.Bohlander@dhhs.nc.gov
919-850-2901

Ohio

Ohio Alliance of DSPs (OADSP)
Bethany Toledo
pcbethany@prodigy.net
www.oadsp.org

Oklahoma

DSPs of Oklahoma (DSP-OK)
Patricia Rost
prost@epmi.org
Diane Potts
dpotts@tulsacc.edu

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Alliance for DSPs (PADSP)
Ernest Gibson
padsp@gmail.com

Texas

Richard E. Garnett
The Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Needs Council of Tarrant County
817.877.1474

Virginia

Amanda Panuline
panuline.amanda@egglestonservices.org

NADSP membership form

DSP level \$10/year

DSP

Other individual level \$20/year

If your state has a NADSP chapter, you will receive dual membership in the state chapter and NADSP.

Frontline supervisor **Self-advocate** **Family member**

Other professional (please specify) _____

Affiliate level \$200/year

For individuals, agencies, providers, associations, and NADSP state chapters who wish to demonstrate a commitment to support the efforts of DSPs.

Individual **Organization**

Supporting organization level \$500/year

For individuals and organizations dedicated to advancing the interests of DSPs and the people they support at a national level.

Individual **Organization**

Sponsoring organization level \$2000

For individuals and organizations dedicated to advancing direct support as an accepted profession at the national level and participation on the NADSP Advisory Committee.

Individual **Organization**

Total enclosed

Make checks payable to NADSP. To pay by credit card, visit www.nadsp.org/membership
(Discounts are not available with online payment)

Mail membership form and payment to:

NADSP, 240 Washington Ave. Ext., Suite 501, Albany, NY 12203-0305

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____