THE 19TH ANNUAL COMMUNITY STARS AWARDS DINNER

“THE STARS HERE AND THE ONES THERE ARE EACH SPECIAL FOR THEIR OWN REASON.”
— NYRAE DAWN

MAY 1, 2018
THE STONE TERRACE BY JOHN HENRY’S
2275 KUSER ROAD, HAMILTON, NJ 08690
Congratulations to the 2018 Stars!
# 19th Annual Community Stars Award Dinner

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Kevin Bayard, Partnerships for People
Marella Saldana, P.I.L.O.T. Services
John Vega, Quality Management Associates
Mary Ellen Benkovich, ResCare
Mark Fink, SERV
Mario Acevedo, Willowglen Academy, NJ

NJACP 19th Annual Stars Electronic Advertisers (as of April 20, 2018)
NJACP 19th Annual Stars Sponsors (as of April 20, 2018)
NJACP Mission

NJACP believes that all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, from childhood through the span of adult years, have the right to live in the community. We believe people have the right to receive the services and supports through a consumer driven system based on person-centered planning and freedom of choice with ready access to services and supports needed to live quality, fully engaged lives in the community.

We promote the availability of a broad range of community services and supports ensured through adequate, flexible funding and the commitment of strength based partnerships with key stakeholders built upon a foundation of trust and mutual respect. These partners are committed to the highest practice model standards in affording care, treatment, safety and quality of life. We value a professional workforce, operating within a culture of operational excellence and committed to the development of a community of learning to advance skills, performance and career opportunities.

As a professional association, we are committed to the development of the industry and support of our members by ensuring continued progress toward greater quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. NJACP actively focuses its efforts on achieving its mission by advocating for the rights and needs of all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities including establishment of a sustainable consumer driven, community-based system of care, with services and supports that focus on quality community living, person-centered planning and freedom of choice with fair and reasonable reimbursement that supports sustainable provider business models. We support the community based provider community by:

• Advancing Practice Standards and Ethics

• Achieving Personal and Professional Development and Industry Growth

• Promoting Education and Advocacy to Support Quality Community Based Services and Supports

• Ongoing Networking and Communication

“MEN ARE LIKE THE STARS; SOME GENERATE THEIR OWN LIGHT WHILE OTHERS REFLECT THE BRILLIANCE THEY RECEIVE.”

— JOSE MARTI
April 19, 2018

Dear Friends,

This year, as every year, our STARS Awards dinner is the most meaningful and special NJACP annual event. There is no event more rewarding than acknowledging and honoring the accomplishments of our STARS. There is no doubt, there are challenges in our field, and it may be easy to lose sight of what is important, however, it is truly the best part of leading this organization--recognizing these amazing individuals and the obstacles they have overcome to lead rich and fulfilling lives; a shining example of what we should all strive for.

All of our STARS are to be admired and applauded for their remarkable successes. You have overcome what many believe to be insurmountable challenges to achieve amazing success. These achievements highlight your determination as well as the dedication of the remarkable providers that believe in you and are committed to assisting you attain remarkable triumphs. It is truly a team effort that brings all of us together this evening.

We also welcome the opportunity to work with recently elected Governor Phil Murphy and the Legislature to make positive changes to better serve tonight’s Stars recipients and everyone serving this exceptional community. We also have the pleasure of welcoming a new Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, Carole Johnson. Commissioner Johnson has already taken the time to speak to our community and attend this inspiring event. She has demonstrated a willingness to work with providers and parents alike and we are grateful.

As you look around, you can well imagine the commitment of time and planning that goes into an event such as STARS. I extend my appreciation to Terry McKeon, chairman of NJACP’s Member Resources Committee as well as to members of the Committee that ALWAYS give so generously of their time. It is their hard work and unfailing support that makes this event possible and remarkably special. I am also grateful to Colleen Klepser as it is her first STARS event and she handled it like a pro, as she always does. More important, there was laughter along the way and that always makes an event and the planning of an event special.

I wish all the best to our NJACP STARS!

Valerie Sellers
NJACP CEO
April 19, 2018

Dear Friends,

Welcome to NJACP’s 19th Annual Community STARS Award Dinner! I cannot believe another has gone by so quickly, but so happy we are back here together again!

This event is like no other, in that we are here to celebrate the outstanding successes of the men and women we serve. These amazing individuals have overcome countless obstacles to achieve what they have. Tonight is our opportunity to recognize them for these achievements. Also, I hope each of you look in the mirror and know that you played a part in this as well.

What a year! For how long have we been saying that we were on the verge of the most significant transition in history? Well, this was the year that we have been waiting for. With the dedication of our DDD and DHS colleagues, we are in the midst of a conversion that impacts every agency and person we serve. I want to acknowledge the state’s continued advocacy to have this transition occur with minimal impact to agencies and the services we provide.

This event would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of our Member Resources Committee and Chair Terry McKeon. Thank you for your efforts. I would also like to recognize our CEO, Valerie Sellers and the entire Board of Trustees for your leadership and advocacy on behalf of those we serve.

Congratulations to our award recipients. Tonight we salute you!

Sincerely,

Darren Blough
NJACP President
April 19, 2018

Dear Friend of NJACP,

The Member Resources Committee of NJACP welcomes each of you to the Nineteenth Annual STARS Award Dinner. All of the individuals that we honor tonight are served and supported by our member agencies and have worked hard to get to this point in their lives. Their accomplishments and successes are not taken for granted because many of these people have had to overcome challenges that would easily overwhelm anybody.

Their persistence and determination have enabled them to live a fuller and more purposeful life and therefore they deserve to be publically acknowledged by their peers, family members as well as New Jersey State legislators and members of the provider and DDD community. Those of us who have been entrusted to provide a system of support to ensure that people with developmental and intellectual disabilities are empowered to live rich and meaningful lives will particularly enjoy tonight’s events because many of us have been especially involved in assisting the “STARS” here tonight to overcome the obstacles and setbacks in their everyday lives.

As you look through this program, please read the stories written on behalf of the Stars as they will surely remind you of the abilities each person has to offer. Our Star’s success stories will surely inspire all of our attendees to continue in their efforts to expand and improve the network of support to the individuals served throughout all of our communities.

Many thanks to all who made this night possible especially the staff of our member agencies, the NJACP Board of Directors, those on NJACP’s Member Resources Committee and especially our CEO Valerie Sellers, along with NJACP’s Director of Education, Events and Member Services, Colleen Klepser.

And finally we gratefully acknowledge our thanks to the Community STARS themselves. We applaud your accomplishments and are honored to be a part of your journey.

Sincerely,

Terry McKeon and the Member Resources Committee
May 1, 2018

Dear Friends:

It is with great pleasure to extend greetings to all those attending the 19th Annual Community Stars Celebration, hosted by the New Jersey Association of Community Providers.

Tonight’s Celebration is an opportune time to recognize the achievements made by the New Jersey Association of Community Providers. NJACP has made meaningful contributions to the State by providing a variety of community-based services and enriching educational opportunities for our residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our Administration echoes the mission of NJACP in our fierce commitment to improving the overall quality of life for all New Jersey citizens. I am inspired by the dedicated support offered for this worthy cause and join with everyone gathered tonight in applauding NJACP and its members on a remarkable job!

I also want to offer special congratulations to tonight’s recipients of the NJCAP 2018 Community Star Award. These Stars have demonstrated an extraordinary level of personal achievement and dedication to their communities that is truly worthy of recognition. I join with everyone gathered this evening in wishing the recipients the utmost success in all future endeavors.

Best of luck to all for an enjoyable and memorable event.

My very best,

Philip D. Murphy
Governor
May 1, 2018

New Jersey Association of Community Providers
140 Scotch Road
Ewing, New Jersey 08628

Dear Community STARS Award Recipients:

Congratulations on being named the 2018 Community STARS Award recipients by the New Jersey Association of Community Providers.

This well-deserved award is recognition of your perseverance in tackling obstacles each day in all that you do. Through your daily activities, you inspire your family, your community, and your peers to live a life of fulfillment. I know I can speak on their behalf in expressing how proud we are of you in attaining this wonderful honor.

Again, thank you for serving as a role model to all and making New Jersey a better place. I wish you continued success in all of your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Sweeney
Senate President
Third Legislative District
April 12, 2018

New Jersey Association of Community Providers
140 Scotch Road
Ewing, NJ 08628

Dear Community Stars Awardees:

Congratulations on being named a NJACP 2018 Community Star! As the State Senator for the 7th Legislative District, I regret that I cannot attend the 19th Annual Community Stars Celebration personally, but I wanted to relay my sincere appreciation for your extraordinary efforts.

Please allow me to commend you all for the contributions that you have made to your communities. Being a recipient of this award is a direct reflection of your courage, strength and determination despite the various challenges that you may face each day. This achievement speaks highly about how well your efforts are received by your peers and community.

Again, I send to you my warmest congratulations on this accomplishment. I appreciate the grace that you have shown and that you will surely continue to display. Best wishes for your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Troy Singleton
Senator, 7th District
April 19, 2018

NJ Association of Community Providers
140 Scotch Road
Ewing, New Jersey 08628

Dear Community Stars Award Recipients:

Congratulations on being named a “Star” for the many contributions you have made to your communities. By overcoming the obstacles and challenges you face every day, you serve as an inspiration for all of us and I commend you for your accomplishments. You should be very proud of what you have achieved and I wish you continued success in all that you do.

I also would like to recognize and thank the Direct Support Professionals who work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities daily to help them achieve their goals. They are a vital part of the galaxy of “Stars” being honored tonight.

My wish is for all of the “Stars” to keep shining bright in their families and communities! We appreciate you. Here’s to a great event!

Sincerely,

Daniel R. Benson
Assemblyman, 14th District
Dear NJACP STARS Award Attendees:

On behalf of the New Jersey Department of Human Services and our Division of Developmental Disabilities, congratulations to this year's STARS awardees.

The New Jersey Association of Community Providers' STARS event is always an inspirational night. It is a wonderful opportunity to honor the achievements of each awardee and to recognize their unique goals and abilities.

New Jersey is proud to support programs and services that help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities live their lives to their fullest potential.

The Department values the opportunity to work together with the individuals we serve, their families, self-advocates and providers in continuing to strengthen the state's system of care for adults with I/DD.

Best wishes to the STARS.

Sincerely,

Carole Johnson
Commissioner

Jonathan Seifried
Acting Assistant Commissioner
NJACP Board of Directors

2018 Officers

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Senior Vice President, Adult Services, Lakeside, Delaware and Pennsylvania Programs, Bancroft

Vice President
Joanna Miller, MNM
Associate Executive Director, Dept. for Persons w/Disabilities – Diocese of Paterson

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Chair, Member Resources Committee
Executive Director, Avidd Community Services of New Jersey (formerly Special Homes of NJ)

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President, Everas Community Services

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NJACP 2018 Member Resources Committee

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Avidd Community Services of New Jersey
(formerly Special Homes of NJ)

Darren Blough
Bancroft

Joanna Miller
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Lisa Gugger
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Mary Nardone
Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health

Dara Reagan
Alternatives Inc.

Donna Renner
Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health

William Placek
New Jersey Institute for Disabilities

Valerie Sellers
NJACP

Colleen Klepser
NJACP

“LOOK AT THE STARS. SEE THEIR BEAUTY. AND IN THAT BEAUTY, SEE YOURSELF.”

— DRAYA MOONEY
NJACP Members (as of April 19, 2018)

The New Jersey Association of Community Providers is proud to represent these agencies serving the IDD Community:

21 Plus, Inc. | Easter Seals of New Jersey | New Concepts for Living
ALFA Development | Eden Autism Services | New Jersey Community Development Corporation
Allegro School and Programs | Elwyn NJ |
Alternatives, Inc. | Enable | New Jersey Institute for Disabilities
Association for the Multiple Impaired Blind | Everas Community Services | Oaks Integrated Services
Avidd Community Services of NJ | Jewish Association for Developmental Disabilities | Occupational Training Center of Burlington County
(Formerly Special Homes of New Jersey) | Jewish Service for the Developmentally Disabled | Partnerships for People
Bancroft | Disabled (JSDD) of Metrowest | P.I.L.O.T. Services
Bellwether Behavioral Health | Kelsch Associates | Princeton Child Development Institute
Benchmark Human Services | Keystone Community Resources | Quality Management Associates
Broadway Respite and Home Care | Keystone Independent Living | ResCare
CaringHouse Projects, Inc. | Life Opportunities Unlimited | SERV Achievement Centers
Community Living Education Project | Merakey Innovative Care (Formerly NHS of New Jersey) | The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities
Delta Community Supports, Inc. | | The Family Resource Network (Caregivers of New Jersey)
Dept. for Persons with Disabilities, Diocese of Paterson | Midland Adult Services | Trinitas Regional Medical Center
Devereux New Jersey | National Institute for People with Disabilities of NJ/YAI (NIPD-NJ) | Willowglen Academy New Jersey
Dungarvin New Jersey | Neighbours | Youth Consulting Services

“We are a nation of communities... a brilliant diversity spread like stars, like a thousand points of light in a broad and peaceful sky.”

— George H. W. Bush
NJACP Preferred Vendors (as of April 19, 2018)

The New Jersey Association of Community Providers is pleased to partner with these organizations which offer goods and services beneficial to our members.

**Butler Human Services**
Butler Human Services helps you create warm attractive homes with stylish furniture designed for long term performance. With many bedroom options, twenty seating styles and a large selection of tables and chairs, we offer the solutions to many furniture challenges. In this economy, it’s critical to spend limited dollars wisely and Butler products are an outstanding value.

Contact Information: Les Helmus  lhelmus@butlerswoodcrafters.com

**Delta-T Group**
Delta-T Group Specializes in referring intermittent professionals in the Human Services, Nursing and Education fields for long and short term needs. Our 24 hours a day 7 days a week availability and unique portfolio of services allow access to a strong network of professionals possessing a wide variety of experience and training. Delta-T Group is able to refer independent professionals with the appropriate Degree(s), Certification(s), Licensure, and Experience to meet each organization’s requirements. Benefits:

- Consistent Care During Vacancies
- Maintain Required Staffing Ratios
- 24hr On-Call Service
- Quick Ramp-UP of Key Programs
- Scheduling Flexibility
- Verification of Credentials & Experience
- 20 years Specializing & Servicing the Industry

Contact Information: Karissa Koch  kkoch@deltatg.com

**Easterseals New Jersey Solutions**
Easterseals New Jersey Solutions provides Administrative Solutions including Electronic Health Records (EHR), for other not for profit organizations to enhance their ability to be effective and efficient in providing services to their consumers, bill for services and enhancing their ability to measure outcomes. No vendor that we know of offers anything like our cost effective value added services such as system administration and end user (NON IT) help desk support (7 days a week and evenings), report building, training, and potential billing services. The Easterseals New Jersey Solutions team would be happy to provide you with a demonstration of our Solutions so that you can see how it can work for your organization.

Contact Information: Denise Majka  DMajka@esnjsolutions.com
**LTC Scripts**

LTC Scripts, a NJ based long term care pharmacy, provides comprehensive medication services to facilities, clinics and agencies state wide. Our IT department specializes in integrating your existing facility or agency software, or they can implement our own programs utilizing our high tech solutions. Program options include electronic medical administration records (E-MAR), direct prescribing capabilities from physician to pharmacy using E-RX and full clinical integration. Customized medication packaging solutions include everything from standard vials and “Bingo” cards to more advanced multi-dose blister packages with “out of facility” or discharge options.

Contact Information: Bob Miller  bmiller@ltcscripts.com

**Mercadien, P.C., Certified Public Accountants**

The Mercadien Group has served nonprofit organizations in NJ and surrounding areas for over 30 years, providing accounting, audit, tax/exemption planning, compliance, risk management, strategic and executive consulting, board training and IT services. At the forefront of issues affecting the nonprofit sector, Mercadien provides a single solution and a proactive and responsive client-service culture designed to benefit all organizations.

Contact Information: Sherise D. Ritter, CPA (NJ and NY), CGFM, PSA  sritter@Mercadien.com

**MobilityWorks**

MobilityWorks Commercial is the leading provider of ambulettes, wheelchair accessible vans, minivans and shuttles in America. Our exclusive and patented SmartFloor system offers over 1,000 seating configurations for seats and wheelchair positions. SmartFloor gives the opportunity to do more with your vehicle – from having a wheelchair transport vehicle in the morning to a transportation shuttle loaded with seats in the afternoon, and anything in between. Every vehicle we sell is compliant with FMVSS, OEM & ADA standards so you have the peace of mind knowing you have the best and safest vehicles possible to transport your passengers. Many finance options and incentives are available.

Contact Information: Kevin Dwyer  kevin.dwyer@mobilityworks.com

**Primepoint**

Primepoint is a payroll processing and human resource management company specializing in the needs of non-profit organizations, and is uniquely positioned to offer technology and services that are customizable to fit the needs of each customer. The company offers advanced cloud based technology to help the finance department efficiently process and manage payroll, as well as enable the human resource department to manage employee work life. Primepoint’s payroll management system is integrated with a time and attendance system, both of which have features specifically designed to make processes easier and more efficient for non-profits. The Human Resource Management system is also fully integrated with the payroll management system and is designed as a modular set of tools so that customers may select only the functionality they need.

Contact Information: Victor Scire  vscire@primepoint.com
**Rue Insurance**

Rue Insurance has been helping clients protect their assets and improve their bottom line for 100 years. We understand the challenges facing nonprofit organizations, particularly in the FFS environment, where you have to do more with less while advancing your mission. So our goal is to support those efforts by relieving the burdens associated with insurance. Our Non-Profit Service Team has the expertise to protect your organization’s assets, reduce risks and costs, and the services to support your daily operations. We provide a wealth of resources to help you attract & retain staff, operate more efficiently, and safeguard your organization against a mission ending loss.

Contact Information: Robert N. Cottone, Jr., AAI  rcottone@rueinsurance.com;

**Staples Business Advantage**

Staples Advantage serves the needs of businesses with 20+ employees — from mid-sized companies through Fortune 1000 organizations. Through its national sales force, Staples Advantage offers full-service account management, free delivery, customized pricing and reporting, eco-conscious products and services and more. More than just standard office supplies, turn to Staples for these supplies:

- Facilities
- Breakroom
- Furniture
- Technology
- Promotional Products
- Print Services

Contact Information: Doug Muhl  Douglas.Muhl@Staples.com

“THE GOOD THINGS YOU DO FOR OTHERS WHEN NOBODY SEES YOU MAKE YOU A REAL STAR IN THE SKY, A SHINING NOBLE STAR BEYOND REACH!”

— Mehmet Murat Ildan
New Jersey Association of Community Providers
19th Annual Community Stars Awards Dinner

Schedule of Events

WELCOME
Darren Blough, President, NJACP Board of Directors

REMARKS
Valerie Sellers, CEO, NJACP

SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE GUESTS
Senate President Steve Sweeney
Assemblyman Dan Benson

SPECIAL GUEST
Carole Johnson, Commissioner, DHS

DINNER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Darren Blough

AWARDS PRESENTATION
Terry McKeon, Secretary, NJACP & Chair, NJACP Member Resources Committee

CELEBRATION DANCE

“A star needs a star.”
— Dejan Stojanovic
New Jersey Association of Community Providers
19th Annual Community Stars Awards Recipients

Lance Eriksen 21 Plus
Christine Owen Alternatives Inc.
Maryanne Quinn Avidd Community Services of NJ
Gilbert Neil Haskins Bancroft
Leanne Lauf Bellwether Behavioral Health
Christine Mortati Broadway Respite and Home Care
Dennis Sanders CaringHouse Projects, Inc.
Rodney Cross Delta Community Supports, Inc.
William “Billy” Schmidt Devereux NJ
Clara Amato Department for Persons with Disabilities, Diocese of Paterson
Nicole Scott Easter Seals NJ
Matthew Santos Eden Autism Services
Felicia Rumbol Elwyn NJ
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Sam Redfern Everas Community Services
Daniel Janiger JESPY House
Cynthia Narin Kelsch Associates
Dorothy Ports Merakey
Stacy Jeunelot Midland Adult Services
Celeste Rappa NJ Institute for Disabilities
Edward Hamwright Oaks Integrated Care
Ray Patillo Occupational Training Center of Burlington County
Kevin Bayard Partnerships for People
Marella Saldana P.I.L.O.T. Services
John Vega Quality Management Services
Mary Ellen Benkovich ResCare
Mark Fink SERV
Mario Acevedo Carr Willowglen Academy, NJ
Introducing Our
2018 Community Stars

Congratulations on your Achievements!

“We are all of us stars, and we deserve to twinkle.”
— Marilyn Monroe
Lance Eriksen lived with his father whom he took care of him. A family friend who helped Lance and his father noticed that Lance was taking care of his father but not himself. When Lance’s father ended up in the hospital, he rode his bike to and from the hospital. Then Hurricane Sandy hit and Lance found himself homeless and alone. He was placed in a motel while father went to rehab. The woman, who was helping Lance and his father, became Lance’s guardian. Lance lived with her until she found him a home at 21 Plus.

When he moved to 21 Plus, Lance began attending ARC Employment Center. He likes AEC, and has been set up for Trial Work Experience. Lance is excited about TWE because he wants to find a job.

Lance grew up with siblings but lost touch when their parents divorced. One day during a conversation at AEC, a staff person noticed that the woman they were speaking to was telling the same family stories that Lance had told. The woman turned out to be Lance’s sister who he had not seen in almost 20 years. Lance and his sister have enjoyed catching up, and plan to go out to dinner soon.

His independence has grown and he enjoys a social life. Lance happily rides his bike through the neighborhood. Recently, he went to Wrestle Mania and has plans to go bowling, to the gym, and out dancing with his girlfriends.

Lance will tell you that his “great personality and sense of humor” are the best things about him. He enjoys helping people. His guardian takes him to do volunteer work. His transition from living with dad, being homeless, living with a family friend and finally living at the group home has been seamless. He now lives without the responsibilities of caring for others and can take care of himself independently. Lance is a true STAR!
Christine “Chrissy” Owen

Christine “Chrissy” Owen has literally grown up with Alternatives, Inc. She was six years old when her mother moved into our Parenting Program in 1987. When she turned 21, Chrissy moved out on her own into our Supervised Apartment Program in Bridgewater, NJ. Chrissy really enjoyed being an independent young woman, spending time with her friends and family, and attending her day program. She also enjoyed eating out a lot, and as is the case with most people, began to gain some unwanted weight over the years. Getting her weight under control was a constant struggle for Chrissy as her apartment was located near many fast food restaurants that lead to daily temptations. In May of 2017, Chrissy and her team decided that moving to a new apartment in a different town might be the answer to helping get her weight under control for the last time. Chrissy moved to our Supervised Apartment Program in Frenchtown, NJ and immediately began to see positive results. At her request, staff helped her portion out all of her meals and kept excess food out of her apartment. In less than a year, Chrissy has lost over 100 pounds! Her weight loss journey has been truly amazing and she has gained so much self-confidence. She continues to work extremely hard exercising and learning how to make the best choices when shopping for food or eating out. Chrissy is also actively job searching with the help of her staff at CEA in Flemington, NJ. Her goal is to work in the retail industry. She loves to shop and takes great pleasure in continuously updating her wardrobe with stylish clothes in her new, smaller size. Chrissy is a great friend and is often found lending a helping hand to the other clients.

Chrissy always has a smile on her face and is a wonderful person with a big heart and a great sense of humor. She is truly deserving of the 2018 NJACP STAR Award!
Maryanne Quinn

Maryanne Quinn is a strong advocate for herself. While living in her previous Supervised Apartment setting, she felt she needed less supervision and desired to be more independent. Even though she loved her roommates, she wanted to live in a setting that matched her abilities. Maryanne made a move to Avidd Community Services into a Supportive Living program where she has thrived and taken advantage of all that the surrounding community has to offer.

Maryanne has maintained her employment at the Shoprite of Greater Morristown three days a week for many years and uses Access Link independently for transportation services to and from work. Maryanne is a graduate of the NJ transportation program where she learned how to review and follow bus and train routes safely.

Upon moving into her new home in Denville, Maryanne took advantage of being in a small town that has everything she wants within walking distance. Maryanne has utilized local establishments and enrolled in art classes in which she is an active participant in creating paintings that she cannot wait to show off. She loves to go into the community to find fun activities and it always open to new experiences.

Maryanne is very “tech savvy” and handles all of her own personal finances, scanning all of her bills and receipts and tracking her spending through QuickBooks. She also likes to take trips through Sprout and someday would love to take a more comprehensive vacation through Guided Tours.

Maryanne has a love of animals and her favorite pastime is relaxing at home watching Animal Planet. If there is a party or activity going on you can count on Maryanne being there. She enjoys visiting family especially her brother and uncle with whom she is close.

Because Maryanne is such a strong role model for self-advocacy and consistently works toward her life goals of independence, she deserves to be recognized as a Community STAR!
Gilbert “Neil” Haskins truly personifies all of the qualities of the STARS award. In one year, Neil, as he prefers to be called, has excelled beyond anyone’s expectation in all aspects of his life. Neil’s transportation goal consisted of him traveling in the community to his doctor’s office and traveling with staff one time per week. He has transitioned from refusing to complete his goal to his current status of successfully traveling alone in the community independent of staff.

Neil went from direct support in all community-based settings to being able to be independent in the community for up to two hours! When in the community, Neil can reach out to one of his preferred staff if he feels he needs support with decision-making, or just to inform staff he is fine. He is able to determine whom he wants to call if he feels he needs support. He also uses his cell phone to independently set up home visits with his mom rather than waiting for his mom to initiate the calls.

Neil has learned how to manage his money more effectively. He is able to enter community establishments to pay his cell phone bill or pick up a few needed items. He now seeks staff out for support when he is experiencing difficulties, which is something he has really struggled with in the past.

Finally, Neil’s greatest achievement to date is that he went from being a very shy individual, preferring to be alone, to being very outspoken and advocating for himself along with his housemates. Neil is the happiest he has been in a long time.

Neil is a shining STAR and he gives light to all who cross his path!
Leanne Lauf

Leanne has been a member and winner on our Special Olympic team for many years. She is not only a champion by winning an award during the Special Olympics but she is also a champion in her daily life. In the home in which she resides Leanne is a great help to her fellow housemates and staff. On a daily basis she has been known to assist her housemates in several tasks from helping them tie a shoe to completing a puzzle. She is a bright spirit who never likes to see anyone unhappy; as a matter of fact she strives to see everyone with a smile. Leanne was able to obtain her High School Diploma through hard work and dedication. Every week until she was able to obtain her diploma, she met with a tutor to strive for success in education. Leanne was able achieve her goal of graduating through perseverance. She is the true definition of a compassionate person. When Leanne walks into a room everyone wants to be near her or wants her to help them and she gladly complies. Leanne is definitely a STAR.
Christine Mortati

Christine Mortati moved into the Kinnelon House in 2011, after losing her mom with whom she lived with her entire life. Moving into Kinnelon was a big adjustment for Chris but she handled herself with grace and optimism and quickly developed friendships with her three other people housemates. Within just a few months, Chris became familiar with her new environment, adjusted to her day program, and formed a meaningful daily routine.

Chris is a sweet loving person. She is known to be kind, thoughtful and always willing to help a friend in need. She enjoys helping her housemates and choosing activities in the community. Every February she donates flowers to her neighbors. Last year for Easter, her group donated supplies to make Easter baskets for children at the local hospital, Chilton Memorial. She also helped with donating Thanksgiving baskets to the local church.

In October 2017, Chris was diagnosed with cancer. As devastating as the news was, Chris managed to keep her chin up and stay positive. She never complained when she felt sick from her treatments or when she felt tired. She completed treatment in November and due to early detection, she is now cancer-free!

Chris is a huge animal lover. Her cat, Gabby, was her constant companion for 15 wonderful years. Gabby recently crossed the rainbow bridge but despite her sadness, Christine chose to share her loving heart by finding and adopting another kitty in need of a loving home from the local animal shelter.

Chris now enjoys time in the community doing things such as visiting the local library, going shopping in the community with staff, and visiting various restaurants. She recently went on a beach vacation and reported she had an amazing time.

Chris has overcome many obstacles in her lifetime and has done so with great strength, humor and heart. She has taught all of us how to handle incredible strife and hardship and never lose faith in ourselves. Chris is a true STAR among us and we are so proud to nominate her for this prestigious award.
CARINGHouse is proud to nominate Dennis Sanders of Egg Harbor Township as our 2018 Community STARS award. Dennis has overcome many obstacles and now leads quite an accomplished life.

Dennis Sanders was born in Jersey City, NJ. After living with in multiple group home placements and through about a year of homelessness, Dennis came to live at CARINGHouse Projects in May of 2011 in a residence located in Egg Harbor Township, NJ. From the moment he arrived, he captured everyone’s hearts with his handsome smile, skillful artwork and compassion to help people.

Part of Dennis’ plan when moving to CARING was finding gainful employment. Luckily for CARING, Dennis has always had a knack for cleaning and taking great pride in a clean home and room. We at CARING thought that Dennis would be an asset to our employment team. Dennis works in the medical day program during the week as a custodian. When he isn’t helping out with keeping the center clean and tidy, Dennis enjoys spending time with the clients of the day program, helping them with activities or just giving kind words of encouragement.

Dennis is also a skilled artist! His artwork brightens the hallways around CARING and other businesses in Atlantic County. Dennis makes drawings, Christmas ornaments, flower arrangements and displays of communities or locations. Dennis uses things like colored pencils, markers, paint, construction paper, ice cream sticks and glue to create his art. He has recently moved to a home with a new huge bedroom in which he keeps the current display he’s working on – which measures about the size of a full bed! When he is not busy with his artwork, Dennis also enjoys going to the casinos, eating out at restaurants and riding his bicycle around town.

Dennis is quite the success story and has overcome many obstacles in his life to get to where he is today. We are so proud of Dennis and his drive to work hard, create art and have fun. It is with great pride and pleasure that we nominate Dennis Sanders for a STARS award!
Rodney Cross

Rodney Cross has lived with Delta Community Supports in Mays Landing since 2016. When Rodney arrived from his residential placement in Pennsylvania, he was happy, frightened and unsure of his existence in his home. Rodney’s transition went much like one would expect; it was new and different and required a lot of attention and behavioral intervention. Rodney tried to become acclimated to his new environment and new life outside of an institution.

Rodney now had his own bedroom, and he had the freedom he wanted. The freedom he found proved to be too much at one time so he struggled trying to find his place in the community and his home, having to be repeatedly sent to a hospital to ensure his safety. With attempts to help Rodney become acclimated to his community and home, he still needed the support of the local law enforcement community to help him understand he was a valuable member of the community and he belonged.

At one time it was determined that maybe the environment was not a good fit for Rodney and so he was scheduled to transfer to another agency; but, with his efforts of managing his emotional health, Rodney was able to stay in his home where his journey began.

After what began as many crisis visits, Rodney began to trust his supports and transformation into the star he is being honored for today. Rodney has overcome many obstacles and his journey is not complete, but just starting. Rodney now participates in Special Olympics playing basketball, and he volunteers at Sister Jeans Soup Kitchen, a well-known charity in Atlantic City, where hundreds of people in need are served meals daily. Rodney is a member of his church, where he was baptized.

Rodney has many dreams and goals for his life and hopes to obtain a job or attend a day program. Now that he has taken the next step in his path, he will be able to work towards reaching those goals and realizing his dreams. Rodney, you are a STAR!
William “Billy” Schmidt

Billy has been with Devereux since 2003 and is naturally a quiet gentleman. He is well known for his trademark, “Hey, Lady”, when he addresses a woman. Last year proved difficult for Billy as he had several set-backs with his health and changes in his home and social environments. During that period, Billy spiraled inward and as a result had difficulty in expressing his wants and needs verbally. Instead of using his words, Billy would express his wants and needs through challenging behaviors. He would tend to stay to himself much of the time and he shied away from group activities.

The team at Devereux worked extensively with Billy to help him through the challenges he was facing. Staff encouraged Billy to point at a picture book so that Billy could communicate what he wanted and he was encouraged to use his words and engage in dialog when pointing at the pictures.

The addition of Devereux-Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (D-PBIS) into the Potsdam Group Home program helped Billy foster a new sense of independence by encouraging participation in activities. Billy has been expanding his use of functional communication and has begun expanding the few words that he was accustomed to using and is stringing them together to form small sentences. Billy now lets staff know what he wants without the use of his picture book. He is always polite by using the words, “May I please...,” before asking for what he wants. His occurrences of challenging behaviors have significantly decreased while his functional communication has increased. He has developed social skills engaging in games, aerobics and cooking activities with his peers.

Billy has also shown significant increases in his activity level and engagement in the community. During the past year at the Woodbury Day Program, he developed new friendships while participating in a SPCA volunteer group as well as community clean-up projects and Meals on Wheels.

Billy has worked very hard on his verbal, social, and vocational skills this past year despite the many challenges he has faced. He has rapidly surpassed all expectations of his goals and continues to shine brightly as Devereux’s STAR!
Clara Amato

The Department for Persons with Disabilities (DPD) Family would like to nominate Clara Amato as our 2018 Community Star.

Clara is a very charming and friendly person. She has a beautiful smile that can light up any room. She is a great social dancer, Special Olympian athlete and a Zumba enthusiast.

She has been living in Kelleher Apartments in Butler for the past 10 years and has made positive strides to an independent life.

Clara always had the ability to be independent and live on her own, but it was a decade ago when Clara made her own decision to move out of her parents’ home to live on her own. With the loving support of her devoted parents, sister, aunts, uncles and others on her team, Clara rose to the occasion and adjusted well to apartment living.

Clara has a caring and compassionate heart. She is often seen helping her roommates with some of their chores and tasks. She is a hard worker and maintains a perfect attendance at her day program, Daughters of Miriam. She enjoys being active and involved in the community and spending time with her volunteer Janice.

Clara is also an active volunteer in the community as part of the Fight for the Right Group. As part of this group she has organized fundraisers, drives and events to give back to disadvantaged children, veterans, abandoned pets and other people in need.

Clara's kind heart, perseverance and dedication makes her our shining star every day!
Nicole Scott has had a very challenging year, but that did not stop her from reaching for her goals. Nicole wanted to take control of her life, and make great changes to further her independence and improve her health; despite the challenges she faced.

This year Nicole had her first appointment with DVR to assist her in becoming more independent in the work force. She told staff that she wanted to do more than work at her OTC program, and expressed getting a job at a retail store. Nicole has also been tackling her health issues one-step at a time. She understands the importance of getting healthy and staying active.

Nicole has made great changes with it comes to preparing meals, food shopping, and exercising daily. Nicole loves life and loves being social. She has come out of her shell more and more every single day. Nicole enjoys going out in the community and interacting with her peers. Staff at Easterseals are very proud of all the accomplishments Nicole has completed thus far and are pleased to nominate her as a 2018 NJACP Community STAR!
Eden Autism is pleased to nominate Matthew Santos for the 2018 NJACP Community STARS Award.

Eden has chosen to nominate Matthew because of the courage and dedication that he demonstrates daily not only at his job, but in everything he does. The qualities that Matthew demonstrates daily are an inspiration for other participants who are just beginning their journey into adult employment.

Matthew resides in Princeton, NJ in one of Eden’s residential Apartments with a house mate. Matthew moved to the apartment in October 2017, and has adjusted very well. Matthew graduated from the Eden School, and began his journey in the employment field by volunteering and continuing to learn new skills. 4 years ago, Matthew joined the team at the Hyatt in Princeton, NJ and continues to excel at the placement.

Assuming the job title of ‘housekeeping’, his responsibilities include sorting laundry, sweeping and vacuuming. Matthew enjoys his work and takes great pride in completing all tasks assigned to him. His sociable personality and work ethic are loved and valued by his coworkers at the Hyatt, and they look forward to working with Matthew daily. In addition to the relationships Matthew has formed at the Hyatt, Matthew values his relationships at Eden and has a good relationship with his family whom he sees often.

Matthew is fun spirited and is always open to new adventures and trying new things. In his spare time, Matthew loves listening to music and enjoys working on puzzles that are 2,000 pieces or more. Matthew is a keen shopper and enjoys going shopping with his peers and house mates and loves being out in the community. During his downtime at the apartment, you can often find Matthew working on 4 different computers and tablets at the same time and is the happiest when working on them. You can always count on Matthew to help with any task or project and he loves helping others, whether at work, the day program or at home.

Eden and Matthew’s fellow teammates are inspired by his hard work and dedication and are proud to name him our Community Star for 2018.
Felicia Rumbol

At Elwyn New Jersey, our rising star and princess is Felicia Rumbol. Felicia came to our Hilbert Group Home in 2006, having experienced abuse and violence as a young girl in her family home. She quickly gained the skills that she needed and moved into Supervised Apartments in Millville, NJ in 2010, where she has thrived. Felicia lives in her own apartment. She is able to cook her own food and maintains a clean apartment. She is proud to have accomplished self-medicating status in 2015. Felicia is a friend to all.

Having been previously employed by Taco Bell, in October 2014, she started employment at Walmart in Turnersville, where she was a cashier. Currently, she works in the children’s clothing department, but she is able to float into other departments. She has many people at Walmart that are mentors and provide natural supports. Look for her the next time you are in the store.

Felicia, also, participates in Special Olympics, having participated in the USA games for bocce, a sport that she continues to play and win! We are very proud of the life that she has created for herself, and expect many more great accomplishments from our star, Felicia Rumbol.
Mark Heller

In 1997, Mark Heller transitioned from the North Princeton Developmental Center into the Life Skills Resource Center (now a part of Enable). Upon entering into his new program, Mark was faced with many new challenges that one might expect when starting their journey onto a new path. It began with having to meet and work with all new people, learn and adapt to a new schedule and routines and adapting to living in a completely new environment. Once Mark was in his new program, he hit the ground running. Due to his extremely social personality, Mark had no problem making new friends. Within no time, Mark started learning about everyone and everyone in turn learned about Mark. Although he transitioned socially into his new surroundings fairly easily, he still had to overcome certain obstacles that impacted his life and his ability for future growth.

Over the years, Mark continued to work hard learning new skills, accepting new challenges and working towards his future goals. Mark had participated in volunteer activities such as Meals-on-Wheels where he would deliver food to local seniors, the Parks Department where he helped to maintain park grounds and the Foodbank where he helped package food for local citizens. He had also started to enjoy going out to places like the mall, Costco, bowling and local farms not so much for the functional or entertainment purposes but merely for the sake of going out to socialize with people he never met. Unless of course you were taking him to places like Burger King, KFC or out for pizza, then it was places like this that he truly loved what he was there for, to eat good food and enjoy a meal out with others.

Fast forward to today, and you get a Mark that has truly made strides in every facet of his life. Socially, Mark remains the same individual he's always been; the life of the party. He continues to cherish and foster new relationships ranging from family friends to new employees. He has been able to participate in more meaningful activities such as going to the library, going on home visits to be with his family and even regularly attending Temple Beth-El in Somerset County. Mark continues to develop his relationship with his four housemates, strives to learn new skills each day and has fully accepted to work on maintaining his composure to continue his success for growth and his ability to acquire and maintain his relations with others.

On March 1, 2018, Mark and the rest of his Life Skills Resource Center family merged with Enable Inc. Once again Mark would have to learn to accept new changes in his life, but together, knowing what Mark has accomplished, understanding the obstacles he has overcome and his knowing his Life Skills family is there to support him; there is no doubt that Mark will be successful in his next journey.
Samuel “Sam” Redfern

Samuel “Sam” Redfern has been blind since birth. Sam attended partial residential school programs for people with disabilities through the 8th grade, where he learned both academics as well as adaptive techniques to navigate the world around him. He then attended public school in his town and graduated High School after coursework in both academics and vo/tech. In 1986, at the age of 21, Sam began attending an Occupational Training program in Mercer County, where he continues to attend to this day. Sam also works at Educational Testing Services in Ewing.

Sam lived with his family until 2014, when he moved into a supported apartment with Everas Community Services. Sam is dedicated to his family, including being a proud Uncle to his nephews Christopher and John, and while he enjoys going home for the holidays and regular visits, he has been thrilled to have his own place. He says that living in his own apartment and learning to do things for himself has been a lifelong dream. Since living at the apartment, Sam has learned to make his own lunch, set the table, load and unload the dishwasher, do laundry, take out the trash, and even cook a little. Being protective, his mom did everything for him while he lived with her, and he says that if she were here today she would say, “Oh Sammy, I am so proud of you! Who would have ever thought you would have your own pad?”

Sam is a friendly person who has a kind word for everyone he meets. He enjoys being social and having fun at baseball games, museums, dining out and parties. He attends church on Sundays and he has a strong desire to continue to learn new skills to increase his independence. He is always up for a new challenge and is currently working to learn braille.

Everas Community Services, Inc. is happy to provide the support Sam needs to live as independently as possible and participate in the activities that he chooses and enjoys in his community. It is an honor to recognize him as an NJACP Community Star and to celebrate the opportunities that are created for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through community based services and supports. Sam’s accomplishments are a shining example of the possibilities for people when given the support they need to realize their full potential.
Daniel Janiger

JESPY House is proud of the accomplishments of all 250 of our clients, but the one who we would like to honor as our 2018 STARS award recipient is Dan Janiger.

Dan grew up in Marlboro, NJ. After High School, he went to NYIT like many JESPY clients. Unfortunately, financial restrictions prevented Dan from completing his four years at NYIT and he moved back home. As Dan put it, “My parents and I were not seeing eye to eye and they could not afford to put me in a program like JESPY House so I was placed in a foster home instead. I went through five different foster homes. At the foster homes I was verbally abused, neglected and mistreated. Even though I went through a very difficult time in foster care I always believed that things would change and one day they did.”

Dan came to JESPY in 2002 as a resident and was able to reconnect with some of his former friends from NYIT. To Dan, JESPY was the light at the end of a dark tunnel and he will tell you that his life has become much better since coming to JESPY. Thanks to the help of different counselors, he now has a job that he really enjoys and friends he can call and hang out with. Dan feels a part of a real community that embraces him and offers endless possibilities for his future.

Dan has worked hard to build up his self-confidence and learn skills that he needed to adequately advocate for himself. Dan has made tremendous strides in working on healthy relationships and this has helped him to maintain a job and long-standing friendships. He is well on his way to achieving all of his goals and very deserving of this award!
Kelsch Associates, Inc. would like to nominate Cynthia Narin for the 2018 STARS Award. Cynthia, who prefers to be called Cindy, was born in Los Alamos, New Mexico. Despite being diagnosed with facial paralysis, a seizure disorder, partial blindness, and difficulty communicating, Cindy has overcome intellectual and physical challenges throughout her life while always maintaining a positive attitude.

Cindy entered Kelsch Associates in January 1983, first attending the Swedesboro Adult Training Center and then transferring to the Gloucester County Crew Labor in 1985. Cindy relied on her strengths and her can-do attitude during her years on the crew labor. In 1992 Cindy began attending the Woodbury Adult Training Center and four years later started her current position completing piece-work at Woodbury Abilities Solutions.

Cindy is not one to allow anything stand in her way of living her life to the fullest. She is a determined woman who manages her medications, uses Access Link, walks her neighborhood, shops for groceries, and maintains her finances independently. In her free time, Cindy enjoys going out to eat, riding her exercise bicycle, and is an award-winning bowler. She has also gone on many trips including a Disney Cruise in 2014 and 2016, Las Vegas in 2015 and 2017, and is now planning on where her future travels will take her.

Kelsch Associates can think of no one more deserving and who embodies the meaning of the NJACP Stars Award than Cindy Narin.
Dorothy Ports

Dorothy has been with Merakey for a little over 7 years. She first resided in Cumberland County and then moved to Burlington County. Dorothy was recently told that she would need to receive daily insulin injections to control her Diabetes. Upon hearing that, Dorothy decided to take steps toward living a better life. She started by doing research and meeting with a nutritionist. Dorothy also began exercising weekly with the Merakey Walking Club. She even encourages other individuals to walk with her and complete weekly step challenges. Dorothy creates healthy menus and goes grocery shopping with staff to make sure she has all of the ingredients needed to follow her diet.

Dorothy has started a new trend with her peers with trying at least one new recipe a week. In four short months, Dorothy was able to lose 25 pounds and was taken off of insulin. Dorothy is known as our “Queen of Fitness”. She continues to make strides in her health journey while encouraging others. Along with her healthy choices and new fitness routine, Dorothy has also made some major changes in her behavior patterns. She is on the path to major success and we could not be more proud to honor her as our Community STAR!!
Stacy Jeunelot

Midland Adult Services is proud to nominate Stacy Jeunelot for the NJACP Community Star Award for 2018. The first thing people notice about Stacy is her contagious smile with which she greets everyone she meets. Stacy can be quiet in a larger group but once she becomes comfortable she is social, excited to participate, and has a great sense of humor.

Stacy was then adopted by Chuck and Carol Lynne Jeunelot one week before her 5th birthday. She attended the Calais School in Hanover and the Deron School in Chatham as a child, where her strengths quickly became apparent. Stacy struggled with short-term memory issues, but she promptly showed school personnel she liked to work hard, and once she learned a task could work independently and took pride in her work. During her childhood years, her love for music was very evident. Stacy loves to sing and dance and often participated in music oriented and other recreation activities through McArp in Morris County. Stacy likes to have a radio and TV in her room and loves to sing along with music and scores from movies. It seems that Stacy knows the words to every song ever written! This year, she is participating in Somerset County Therapeutic Recreation’s Spectacular 60’s program. The group is learning songs and a dance routine paying tribute to the music of the 1960’s and will be putting on a performance for family and friends in late April. Stacy excitedly participates in Special Olympics track and field each year. She also is an active member of Midland’s Drama Club and has had several solos in Midland Adult Services Production’s annual performances over the years.

Stacy moved to the Pleasant Run Road group home with Midland Adult Services in 2001. She can often be seen completing chores around her home and is eager to help support staff to maintain her house or assist with making a meal. She enjoys baking and eating the muffins, cookies and other treats she makes for herself and her five housemates.

Stacy attends Midland Adult Services work center five days a week and is known as a very hard worker. Before attending the MAS day program, Stacy was struggling to complete her work. Stacy’s improvement upon entering Midland Adult Services is summed up by Matt Lanese, Coordinator of Employment Services who writes, “Stacy is a truly unique individual here at the Midland Adult Services program. She can be counted on to enter our facility every morning with a smile on her face and a genuine eagerness to accept any task presented to her. We are delighted and would like to thank NJACP for recognizing Stacy and her exemplary work with the 2018 STAR award.” Everyone at the Pleasant Run Group Home and Midland Adult Services is happy to acknowledge Stacy’s accomplishments that earned her the NJACP STAR Award. We are proud to have her as part of the Midland family.
“Choosing to live your life by your own choice is the greatest freedom you will ever have.” Anonymous

It is said that without the darkness, stars cannot shine. Celeste Rappa is a woman who shines… especially through times of darkness and she creates a beautiful light for all who are fortunate enough to be a part of her life.

In 1975, Celeste graduated from the Lakeview School, which is the flagship of the New Jersey Institute for Disabilities. With determination and a great dose of spunk, Celeste pursued meaningful activities at the NJID Adult Training Center in Port Reading. More than four decades later, Celeste still attends the program where she is constantly expanding her interests; gaining new skills.

Celeste has always been very adept at using augmentative communication devices. She was among the first Lakeview students to master the technology which was just being developed and Celeste continues to utilize the latest tools for communication. Today, an iPad equipped with communication apps is Celeste’s device of choice.

Supported by a loving and devoted family, Celeste has always found happiness and fulfillment in her life. In 1988, Celeste decided that a group home would best fit her needs and in her new NJID home, Celeste expanded her world with new experiences, new friends and a new independence. Through the years, there have been times of great joy and painful sorrow, especially when Celeste’s beloved mother passed, a few years ago. But Celeste found an inner strength that she shared with her family; she was a comfort to her father and sister. The Rappa family remains exceedingly close and supportive. When they visit Celeste the group home rings with laughter as they play board games- and Celeste is always a tough competitor!

With grace and poise, Celeste has stared down several serious illnesses and she continues to work towards wellness. With a magnificent inner strength, Celeste never complains about treatments but directs her attention to the future. Celeste keeps her balance by losing herself in music… that’s a real passion. All types of music, as long as it’s upbeat and lively, captures her heart. Recently, Celeste attended a performance of Jersey Boys and then was rocking out at a Barry Manilow concert with her dear friend of twenty-one years, Kathy.

There’s no time for worry, there is much life to be savored- Celeste lives that choice every day. And even in the darkness, Celeste’s star always shines bright.
Edward Hamwright

Edward Hamwright was born and raised in Berlin NJ. He traveled throughout the state of New Jersey as a certified Electrician. At the age of 29, Edward was struck by a car. His life was not the same after the car accident. Edward became unable to care for himself because of brain damage that occurred as a result of the accident. Mr. Hamwright has been with Oaks Integrated Care since 2016.

Edward realizes how precious life is. He enjoys spending time with his wife and going to church. He also enjoys traveling, working as a maintenance worker, and helping others at his Supervised Apartments. Edward also enjoys going to the movies, his wife's cooking, shopping, and watching the Eagle's and the Sixer's play.

Edward often makes dinner or dessert and invites friends over to enjoy his cooking. He also gives them good advice about behaving properly.

Edward works at the Pilot Program. He has been an outstanding worker, as well as a role model and great influence to his peers. He has made significant progress at Pilot and is considered a team leader. Oaks Integrated Care is proud to nominate Edward Hamwright for the NJACP Stars Award.
On top of being a music lover, an arts and crafts enthusiast, and an avid stuffed alligator collector, Raymond Patillo is a 68-year-old male member of the Occupational Training Center. Ray has been a resident of the Patricia Leuliette Group Home since 2008. Additionally, he attends the OTC Day Program in Southampton.

In 2017, Raymond suffered from medial issues, resulting in a hip surgery, and a two-week stay at the hospital. Later, he was transferred to a rehabilitation facility because he could not walk independently. Medical obstacles continued to arise; with medication changes, Raymond developed a fear of falling. This fear made participating in rehabilitation exercises extremely challenging. Following six months of treatment, the Rehabilitation Center concluded that Raymond would not be able to walk again, due to his fear, and sent him home, bound to a wheel chair.

Fortunately, his housemates and familiar residential staff visited him three times a week; however, finally returning home, in August 2017, is what really lifted Raymond’s spirits. His attitude had completely come around, and the staff were able to encourage him to get up from his wheelchair and walk using a walker the same day he returned home.

Progress was slow, but after a lot of encouragement, Raymond became much more comfortable getting out of his chair and walking around. He attended physical therapy twice a week, and did daily exercises with his staff. Slowly, Raymond transitioned completely away from his wheelchair, using only his walker to get from place to place. Raymond Patillo’s dedication and motivation to overcome his fears is why the Occupation Training Center believes that Ray is a STAR!
Partnership for People would like to nominate, Kevin Bayard, for the 2018 STARS award. Kevin, has been an active member of his community for over fifteen years. Due to a work injury in the supermarket industry, Kevin had to retire. With lifelong medical concerns he would be facing, Kevin did not give up, he took this opportunity to focus on the things he loved most, civic service and giving back to his community.

As a resident of Florham Park, the community he resides in, Kevin is well known for his volunteer efforts through his self-motivated recycling initiatives. Kevin, who enjoys being out in the community, can be found navigating through the town, cleaning up old cans for recycling. During down time, Kevin enjoys visiting the local establishments where he has built relationships with store owners and the regular customers. Having an outgoing personality that’s contagious makes it easy for those who meet him to enjoy his company. Kevin, who also enjoys exploring new opportunities with his support staff, recently added personal fitness goals to his weekly routine by attending the gym and paying closer attention to his physical health. While taking the time for himself, Kevin’s bright spirit impacts the people he meets at the gym.

Kevin’s father was a Firefighter, he instilled in Kevin a passion for helping others. Because of this, he has been an active volunteer at multiple fire houses in surrounding communities for over twenty-five years. Kevin volunteers weekly at the New Jersey Fireman’s Home, a program for retired Firemen in Booton Township. Kevin was recently honored by the program for his dedication and consistency over the years.

When thinking of the ideal individual to be honored for the NJACP STAR award, Kevin undoubtedly came to mind. Kevin possesses the character and the drive we at Partnerships feel are honorable and noteworthy. We would like to thank NJACP for the opportunity to shine light on such a worthy candidate and we would like to thank Kevin for allowing us to accompany him on this journey.
When Marella Saldana first came to PILOT, she was very guarded and shy and did not want to talk to anyone. Today, Marella is a different person! She is more sociable and very helpful with her peers. Marella likes to help them hang up their jackets and put their lunch boxes in the refrigerator.

Marella likes to be involved with all Day Program activities. One of the special things she likes to do is work with one of our consumers in singing a song. It is a pleasant sight to see and delightful to hear! Marella works well with her peers on a daily basis and comes in everyday with a positive attitude. Marella has learned a lot since being in this program, is a very thoughtful person, and has made many friends. She always uses proper etiquette towards other people and is very independent.

Overall, Marella is a good achiever and likes to accomplish her goals. She has made great progress and attained overall personal growth; which makes her a perfect candidate for the 2018 NJACP Community STAR!
John Vega

John Vega, who resides with QMA, a strong advocate, who speaks his mind, who has earned the admiration of others. This is a man who we have nominated for the 2018 STARS award.

John, who is from Puerto Rico, is a proud man of his heritage and his family. As the oldest living sibling John takes this role seriously. Not only within his family, but his extended family as well. John extends that responsibility to be the role model to others whom he lives with and those that he lived with at New Lisbon Developmental Center.

John is a life-long advocate. He is a man on a mission, when he selected QMA as his provider, John made it well known he would not leave unless QMA also took his best friend. No… was not a word John was going to accept for an answer. That was 10 years ago! Years after John and his friend moved, he urged us to bring another friend in who was leaving New Lisbon. Now the three of them are united again.

John likes to speak his mind. He has gone to Trenton rallies, testified at the Senate hearing about closing state centers, visited legislators in the community including Representative MacArthur to talk about the impact of changes to Medicaid, and he has participated in the DSP Wage Campaign.

Most recently, John volunteered to be filmed for a promotional video. John and his DSP spent a full day being followed around by the film crew resulting in a 3 minute video that shows the remarkable work and outstanding relationship between him and his DSP. John calls her his family.

John’s advocacy work has earned him the respect of others. He is nominated as a 2018 NJACP STAR due to continued advocacy and commitment to others with developmental disabilities.
Mary Ellen Benkovich

ResCare NJ is proud to nominate Mary Ellen Benkovich as our 2018 STARS award recipient. Mary Ellen has been a participant in ResCare’s residential services program since 2010, and lives with three of other ladies in the Oak Avenue home in Cherry Hill. Mary Ellen is someone whose vivacious personality captivates everyone with whom she comes in contact. Her gift of story-telling and adventurous spirit make her a wonderful companion and friend; and she always attracts attention in the best possible ways.

Mary Ellen is very motivated and one of the hardest working individuals in her home. Everything is more exciting when she is around. Her motivation can be seen in the pride she takes in her appearance, home management, activity planning, and even chores! One can always count on Mary Ellen to check the mail each day, make sure the home’s recycling is being done without fail, and initiate activities both at her home and at her day program. Her outgoing personality not only makes others happy to be around her, but motivates them as well.

Of Mary Ellen’s many outstanding qualities and accomplishments, those that really make her a STAR are her kindness and ability to advocate for others. She always considers the interests of her peers in meetings and social settings. Her sense of humor and laugh are contagious, and if people are smiling, it’s a good bet that Mary Ellen has been around them. She is also incredibly generous with others, consistently willing to share and make sure other’s needs are met, sometimes even above her own. As an advocate in her group home, Mary Ellen consistently offers helpful and positive ideas to peers and staff alike.

ResCare NJ is constantly encouraged by Mary Ellen’s passion for life and positive attitude. She makes motivates staff and peers alike and makes coming to work a real joy. She is a true STAR!
Mark Fink

Mark, a man who enjoys listening and creating music, joined SERV Residential and Day Habilitation, May 2017. When Mark first arrived he struggled to get acclimated to Group Home living. Mark was previously with DCF, this was his first DDD placement. Mark had a hard time adjusting to his new living arrangements. However over time, Mark worked hard on developing coping skills, developed communication skills to make his needs, wants and feelings known. Over the past year, Mark has worked hard and adjusted to a new life within the SERV family. Over the past four months Marks hard work, excepting his new home, trusting his supports, has lead him to a fun filled successful lifestyle.

Recently, due to weather related power outages Mark and his housemates had to be moved several times to different hotels. The structure and routine he was accustomed to was broken. During these trying and uncertain times Mark was able to remain calm and carry on his daily activities such as going to program and interacting with his fellow housemates without any behavioral outbursts. Something Mark would have struggled with in the past.

One thing that makes Mark shine, is his love and passion to help others, he is honest and has genuine concern for his peers and staff at SERV.

Due to the remarkable progress Mark has shown in a short amount of time; SERV Achievement Centers Inc. would like to nominate Mark for this year’s STAR Awards.
Mario Acevedo Carr has been with Willowglen, both residentially and part of our Adult Day Habilitation Program, since 2012. Mario came to Willowglen at 21 years old with quite a few behavioral concerns. In the six years that Mario has been with Willowglen, he has matured tremendously, proving he can exercise self-control and utilize coping skills when needed most. Mario has come a long way, making great strides towards his goal of independence.

Over the past couple of years, Mario has made progress in several domains. He has earned his way to having unsupervised time for both leisure and work purposes, and soon for continuing education through the LACE Program at Sussex Community College, in which Mario would like to eventually pursue Video Game Design. Mario likes to spend his time developing new skills that will help him achieve his goals. Mario is employed with the Maintenance Department completing projects, both big and small, such as painting, fixing washer/dryers and even assisting with water-damaged basements. He also works at the Day Program assisting with lunch prep and administrative duties.

He is one of the few in our program who has obtained his learners permit, working towards securing a driver’s license, while trying to save up for a car. He continues to work on financial independence, learning how to budget and pay bills with his debit card. Mario also enjoys expanding his skills to foster self-worth through hobbies that include building computers, mastering the World Wide Web, poetry, music production and physical fitness. He also has a passion for fashion keeping up with all the latest trends.

We would like to acknowledge and honor Mario for his continued progression. We look forward to the day when he is ready to be a part of the community independently, achieving all the goals he sets out for himself. For all these reasons, we proudly nominate Mario Acevedo Carr as our 2018 NJACP Community STAR!
The Silence

She lays awake, moonlight shining in her hair
Moonlit day, another night
She fends alone, without his touch, her skin so cold
Acid running through her veins
Lost in everything she trusts
Still can't get enough
Even though the world she loves
Won't ever be the way it was
That his heart of stone left her sad and cold
She forgets him every night
And she cries, and she dies a little more each night
Nothing left behind
Say you love me and the silence will be freed
Never fear to take her back
Every kiss, every taste
Wish it's time to fade away
Even though, the world she loved
It won't ever be the way it was
And her heart is weak, hands shaking
Every night she cries alone, and dies a little more each time
Say you love me

Poem written by Mario Acevedo Carr, Willowglen Academy’s Star
Thank You to everyone who helped make this evening a success!
Hope you enjoyed tonight’s celebration of the Stars!
New Jersey Association of Community Providers
19th Annual Community Stars Awards Dinner
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This year, the New Jersey Association of Community Providers decided to go digital our advertising. There will be no ads in this program. Instead, please check out the television screens and monitors scrolling the organizations ads. Printouts of the ads are also available for pick-up.

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And to the following electronic advertisers who supported our conference with their ads — Thank-you!:

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To our sponsors who supported the 2018 Stars event — we appreciate the contributions you made to ensure the success of our awards dinner!:

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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2018 STARS! WE ARE SO VERY PROUD OF EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU!

THE NJACP MEMBER RESOURCE COMMITTEE AND NJACP STAFF

“But to me, they were beautiful, like their own constellation.”
— Ava Dellaira