

INDIVIDUAL AWARD WINNER

**Kyle Harney, Direct Support Professional, Relief
New England Village**

Nominated by: Gail Brown

One of the biggest challenges facing today's support professionals is finding employment that utilizes the skills and talents of the individuals they support. DSP Kyle Harney thought way outside the box when he came up with the idea to film a show called "Cooking with Kenny and Kyle," as a way to put individual Kenny D.'s unique skillset to work. Knowing Kenny is a natural performer who enjoys the spotlight and is filled with a plethora of trivia that he loves to share, this show seemed the ideal opportunity to capitalize on those talents. Kyle secured several local businesses to sponsor the show, which is produced by Pembroke Town News and airs on YouTube. Just 15 months later, the venture has a following of 1,800 viewers and earns enough money to cover expenses, including the star's salary. Because of Kyle Harney's keen marketing skills, his creativity, and exceptional insight into what motivates this individual, Kenny is now working in a capacity that gives him the chance to dish up interesting facts on a variety of topics while making recipes from one of his favorite cookbooks, all while in front of the camera! To view a segment, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/KennyKyleCooking/>

AGENCY WINNERS

**Colleen Ponte, Director of Risk Management
Carly Colden, Senior Human Resource Generalist
Delta Projects**

Nominated by: Mary Devlin

In spring 2018 Colleen Ponte, Director of Risk Management, and Carly Andrews, Human Resources Generalist, initiated Office Connections, a volunteer opportunity for administrative staff to become Office Connectors (OCs) acting as advocates for, and connecting with, individuals in the homes Delta operates. Based on shared interests and/or geography, administrative staff who do not always have opportunities to engage with people with I/DD were matched with people Delta supports. Each OC receives 4 hours of paid time per month and a small annual budget for items such as decorations, lawn/garden supplies, activity materials, and food items. The OCs spend time each month in their selected home engaging with the people and staff of that home. Since its initiation, OCs have joined individuals and staff at activities such as a Brockton Rocks game, cookouts, pie baking, holiday decorating, and paint night. The OCs also assist in linking homes with their communities and engaging in local activities such as Norwood Day 2018. In addition to enhancing the quality of life for people Delta supports, OCs are additional advocates for the home, helping managers navigate internal administrative processes, guiding staff to local community resources, and assisting individuals in expanding leisure activity opportunities.

AGENCY AWARD WINNER

Melissa Pepin, Therapy Manager

LifeStream

Nominated by: Bonnie Mello

During the last year, Melissa Pepin noticed that many of the individuals LifeStream supports could increase their independence and progress in goal development using assistive technology. She recognized that many of the individuals, their caregivers and family members were unaware of the technology supports available to increase independence and allow for a voice for those who do not communicate verbally. Melissa was determined to educate all involved in order to ensure that assistive technology would be available to everyone to improve their quality of life. Melissa lobbied the agency to make I-Pads available at all home and day locations. Once the I-Pads were available, Melissa worked with the staff and individuals to identify assistive and/or sensory applications that would increase independence and control over their own lives. Also, Melissa worked with a team of employees and DDS professionals to develop an individualized assistive technology assessment to be used for each individual supported by LifeStream. Melissa continues to work with the team to introduce new equipment, train staff and ensure current equipment is used as needed. The DDS Licensing and Certification team asked Melissa if they could use the self-assessment tool she developed with other provider agencies, allowing for replication of success for others served in the provider community.

COMMUNITY AWARD WINNER

TILL Hudson Day Habilitation Program – Cluster Three Participants and Staff

Toward Independent Living and Learning, Inc. (TILL)

Nominated by: Linda Naclerio

For the past three years, the TILL Hudson Day Habilitation program's "Cluster 3" volunteers have supported the Dig Deep's Navajo Water Project to bring clean, running water to families in need. This project empowered those who have experienced needing the assistance of others with an opportunity to assist others while creating positive lasting change. Marilyn Kuhn, Hudson Day Program Manager, was moved by a television segment about the Dig Deep organization and its goal to provide clean, running water to families living in New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. Marilyn brought the idea of supporting the project to the individuals and staff at her program - and they answered. Since 2016, the Hudson Day Program's Cluster 3 has gone above and beyond with its support: the group sponsored seven sinks, a whole well and pump system for one family and has raised approximately \$6,000 – the equivalent of two home water systems. The most significant part of the project was the active participation of all the group members. The group created a multimedia presentation with the goal of educating others about the needs of Navajo Nation people and what they could do to help. The group practiced in front of peers before presenting at schools, their DDS offices, and the TILL Office. The group also provided water bottles to collect coins and thanked contributors with water related art, hand-made soap and coasters, and sand art to celebrate this traditional Navajo art form.