

DSP WEEK 2010!

Anyone working even in the periphery of the industries which serve individuals with developmental disabilities knows the essential and indispensable role of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). DSPs provide support, love, and care – fundamental elements of the provider system. Without DSPs, tasks such as meal preparation, medication management, bathing, dressing, travel to school and work, participation in religious and recreational activities, and general daily affairs would be impossible for some consumers.

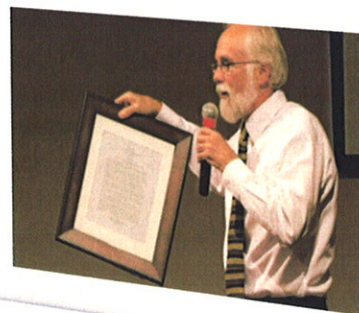
This year, Senate Resolution 558, co-sponsored by U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D – Ohio), designated the week of September 12 as National Direct Support Professionals Week. Among the many ways the work of DSPs was recognized and celebrated was the continuation of a focus on the issues surrounding and affecting the profession.



Three DSPs with Congressman Bob Latta on a visit to Washington, DC (left to right)
Anita Mann (DSP, Sunshine), Congressman Bob Latta, Addie Moore (DSP, Rescare), John Metzger (DSP, Sunshine)

Combining celebration with activism, the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) organized the “DSPs to DC” event for September 13 – 14, as a part of its annual Governmental Activities Seminar. The agenda for the two-day event included presentations to Congressional staffers emphasizing the need to develop a sustainable DSP workforce through wage, training and other improvements; workshops on shaping and strengthening the DSP professional identity; and award ceremonies recognizing the “best of the best” of DSP professionals from across the nation, among many other events and activities.

At the state level, Ohio Governor Ted Strickland recognized the week with an official proclamation, acknowledging “the dedication and vital role of direct support professionals in enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities of all ages.” Governor Strickland also pointed out the prevalence of “precarious financial circumstances” among DSPs, likely stemming from “inadequate wages and benefits” and contributing to “high turnover and vacancy rates.” (pictured at right, Director John Martin with Strickland resolution)



The Ohio Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (OADSP) celebrated the week with a film festival on September 15 in Columbus. Over 300 DSPs from around the state were in attendance for this first annual event saluting “the valuable service and supports offered by DSPs around Ohio” and featuring films from the Sprout Touring Film Festival and focusing on individuals with developmental disabilities around the world.



Short films were submitted by Ohio DSPs and screened by the audience. Shortly following the screening, OSCARS were awarded. Emcee Scott Osterfeld stated that O-S-C-A-R was an acronym for Opportunity, Spirit, Commitment, Action, and Respect. The "Oscars" were awarded to the Most Original, Most Professional, Most Inspiring, and Most Comical. There were Honorable Mentions for the Most Informative, Most Heartwarming, Most Realistic, and Best Teamwork. The obvious crowd favorite and winner of Most Comedic was for the film DSP Ladies. To see these films, visit <http://www.youtube.com/OADSP>



OPRA encouraged members statewide to participate in the week and to recognize the hard-working staffers serving individuals with developmental disabilities. OPRA's focus remains on state and national efforts to support the improvement of DSP wages, training, benefits, and supervision, and many OPRA members took time during the week to specially recognize and celebrate the dedication and accomplishments of their DSP staff in their local communities:

- REM Ohio sponsored four company picnics at community parks. All employees and the individuals they serve were invited. Employees received a thank-you gift - a back sack or grocery tote printed with this year's theme, "relationships make all the difference in the world"
- Many of the individuals receiving services through Wood Lane Residential Services helped decorate over 120 yellow flags thanking the DSPs. These flags were then displayed in the Wood County Courthouse Atrium, along with an explanation about the display, and Governor Strickland's proclamation. For the remainder of the week, the flags were exhibited at WLRS's offices. Additionally, each DSP received a thank-you card designed by one of WLRS's consumers, printed by Real Ink, a small art studio supported by the Wood County Board of DD, and signed by WLRS administrators.
- Back by popular demand, Guernsey Residential's Executive Director, Janice Hall, hosted a picnic lunch and cornhole tournament at her home for all staff.

- CRSI DSPs enjoyed pizza parties, candy gifts, trivia games, scavenger hunts and thank-you notes from consumers and colleagues alike. DSPs were also given a “cozy case” gift with the slogan “Proud to be a DSP,” which was also featured in newspaper ads throughout the week.
- Echoing Hills Village facilities throughout the state of Ohio held week long celebrations for DSPs. All facilities’ respective lunches, awards ceremonies, etc., were complemented with t-shirts and lunch bags for each DSP from the corporate office.
- LADD incorporated DSP recognition and appreciation with its annual picnic, which featured a 14-foot banner created by a DSP and thanking DSPs. Goodies, thank-yous and t-shirts sporting LADD’s new logo were shared among all staff – but the highlight of the week was the free carwash the supervisors hosted for all DSPs.
- Welcome House celebrated the week with gifts and thanks from Tony Thomas, Executive Director, to the organization’s DSP staff. Additionally, each DSP’s name was written on a trophy or ribbon, posted on a board, and placed in the receptionist’s area to thank them for “a Job Well Done.”
- RHC (Resident Home Corporation) celebrated at their Monfort Heights campus. RHC employs 130 Direct Support Professionals to support the people they serve. RHC recognizes their hard work by washing their cars and throwing them a cookout.
- Dungarvin Ohio surprised DSPs. Any staff who came to the office Monday morning had their car washed for free by the agency directors. The staff whose cars were washed said they felt very special and appreciated. A staff appreciation picnic at Blendon Woods was also held on Oct. 1.
- Rose-Mary Center celebrated DSP week with a Tailgate party. Senior Managers planned, cooked, and served at the event that featured grilled burgers, hot dogs, and brats. Beer (root) and ale (ginger) was served along with plentiful sides and a large (and very popular) dessert buffet. DSPs were allowed to wear their favorite team jersey or shirt instead of their normal uniform shirt. Over 70 employees attended and all were entered into a raffle for some great prizes.
- Sunshine made t-shirts, distributed specially-decorated cookies and did a big feature in the monthly newsletter about the work that DSPs do. The agency also provided a “Buy One, Get One Free” coupon to Chipotle for all DSPs. The people served by the staff were helped to make signs, which hung around our campus, thanking DSPs for a job well done. Executive director, Betty Holland, wrote an editorial to the city newspaper, *The Toledo Blade*, on behalf of DSPs, asking that their pay be raised.



Supervisors at LADD offer DSPs a free carwash!



Staff at Rose-Mary enjoy a tailgate party!



Picture board at Guernsey Residential's office that commemorates DSP week



Poster hanging in the office at The Welcome House with each DSP's name

Flags designed by individuals with developmental disabilities served by Wood Lane Residential Services hang in the Wood County Courthouse.

