

# THE EEDA READER



*Creating Opportunities for Happy Lives*

THANK YOU, DSPs!



DSP RECOGNITION WEEK  
September 11-17, 2022

ANCOR | RELIAS

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



My thanks and appreciation go out to EEDA's Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) for their commitment to providing essential care and improving the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Currently, our industry is experiencing a massive workforce crisis, but EEDA's DSPs keep showing up and doing what needs to be done every day, even when their workload is difficult. DSPs are the foundation of the EEDA organization and ensure that the people we support receive quality care and have the opportunity to lead lives of distinction. During Direct Support Recognition Week, the EEDA team collectively recognizes the incredible work our DSPs do every day—they truly are amazing.

*Lisa Meyer Fertal*

Lisa Meyer Fertal

Executive Director





## A MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



### To the Heart & Soul of EEDA – With Gratitude & Appreciation

This week, September 11-17, 2022, is National Direct Support Professional Recognition Week. This celebration is part of a national movement to bring attention to the important role of all DSPs, but especially you.

John F. Kennedy said **“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them.”** Living up to and expressing our appreciation to EEDA’s DSP workforce is a challenge but one this organization strives to meet every day. Our DSPs are the strong foundation

from which remarkable accomplishments grow. EEDA would not exist if not for these remarkable people whose efforts are at the very heart and soul of our work. You show up every day and night, 365 days a year to provide assistance, education, new experiences, and tender care to the men and women we are so fortunate to support.

Thank you for standing up for and beside the people we support every day. You not only generate hope but share experiences, care, safety, learning, patience, and creativity that helps all swell with pride, accomplishment, growth, good health, and safe lives.

You are the microphone, not the voice, for many and bring out the best in others. The people we support may sometimes forget your name or what you say to them, but they will never forget how you make them feel. I believe EEDA’s DSPs make the people we support feel valued, important, proud, safe, and loved each day. What could be better?

An awesome DSP is hard to find and impossible to forget, and EEDA is fortunate to have found you. I appreciate how hard you all work and know it is not always easy but truly believe there are no limits to what EEDA’s DSPs can do when we all work together.

What the world needs now is more of you!

With gratitude and appreciation,

Joy O’Shaughnessy

Associate Executive Director





YVETTE M. AGUIAR  
Town Supervisor

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Ceremony Comments for:

Proclamation Presentation for "Direct Support Professional Week"  
Town Hall Board Room, September 16, 2022

Supervisor Yvette Aguiar:

Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for being here, today!

We are gathered here to present you a proclamation to formally recognize the critical important work Direct Support Professionals perform every day, so individuals with disabilities can live successfully as part of our community.

Every industry has its challenges, but unquestionably, the day-in and day-out challenge YOU face, as Direct Support Professionals, require a truly unique combination of compassion, empathy, skill and dedication. You are all TRULY gifted people and your commitment to our disabled population is immeasurable.

Whether you are assisting with personal care, feeding, cooking, cleaning or administering medications, your combined skills enable those with disabilities to live locally, remaining close to their families thus avoiding the alternative of institutional care.

On behalf of myself, Councilman Kern and the entire Town Board, I wish to present to Lisa Fertal and Brenda Catalano and all of the Direct Support Professionals of East End Disability Associates a proclamation in recognition of "Direct Support Professionals Week" and honoring those who go above and beyond. We applaud you all!!

Thank you and please, stay safe, everyone!

Thank you to the Town of Riverhead and Supervisor Yvette Aguiar for officially proclaiming DSP Recognition Week!

T O W N O F R I V E R H E A D

# Office of the Supervisor

## PROCLAMATION

### DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS' RECOGNITION WEEK SEPTEMBER 11 - 17, 2022

*Whereas, it is both fitting and proper, the Supervisor of the Town of Riverhead, the entire Town Board and all citizens of the Town of Riverhead join East End Disability Associates, Inc. in honoring those who have gone above and beyond; and*

*Whereas, Direct Support Professionals provide essential support to help keep individuals with disabilities connected to their family and community, to live meaningful, successful lives, and to avoid costly institutional care. Support workers assist with daily living, including personal care, feeding, cooking, and cleaning, administer medication, help get a job or see friends; and*

*Whereas, These Professionals are vital to the life experiences of many people with disabilities in the Town of Riverhead and are often the difference between community participation and isolation. Each individual professional must build a close, trusting relationship with individuals; and*

*Whereas, the work of Direct Support Professionals is essential to allow individuals with mental health issues and disabilities to live successfully as part of their communities, and also enables these individuals and their families to avoid extended, costly institutional care; and*

*Furthermore, Direct Support Professional Week is an opportunity to recognize the important work of those who ensure inclusive environments with equal access to all; and*

*Let it be known, the Town of Riverhead recognizes the vital role that dedicated Direct Support Professionals play in enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities. We extend our appreciation for their contributions that help thousands overcome challenges and help them reach their full potential; and*

*Now therefore, be it proclaimed, that I, Yvette M. Aguiar, Supervisor of the Town of Riverhead, together with the entire Town Board, do hereby proclaim the week of September 11-17, 2022 as Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week in the Town of Riverhead, and urge all residents to sustain public knowledge of these individuals who contribute to making a quality community life for those with disabilities.*

Proclaimed, this 11<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2022.



TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS  
Timothy Hubbard  
Frank Beyrodt  
Kenneth Rothwell  
Bob Kern



*Yvette M. Aguiar*  
YVETTE M. AGUIAR  
TOWN SUPERVISOR

*In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the Town of Riverhead to be affixed this 11th day of September, in the Year of Our Lord, Two Thousand and Twenty-Two.*





# Congratulations

The first Great Unparalleled Service (or G.U.S.) award was given to Sally Easter from EEDA's Self-Directed Services program. Sally is an EEDA veteran of more than 20 years whose big heart, dedication, and tenacious spirit made her a popular choice to receive the much deserved recognition. The G.U.S. Award is named for Gus Lagoumis, who recently retired from his role as Chief Administrative Officer.



## THANK YOU, CATHERINE!



Another year and Ryan (and the rest of the Mangan's) are lucky enough to have Catherine Cook in our lives. Our son Ryan absolutely adores her as I am sure you can tell in the picture! Thank you, Catherine, you really are so appreciated in our life.

## THANK YOU, NICK!

Greg's support staff is one of a kind and is truly irreplaceable in Greg's eyes! Nick is a patient, kind, and caring person. Gregory and Nick are the perfect match! We love Nick and truly appreciate him in all he does with and for Greg!

Kathy Ficara





# THANK YOU, TEAM CVDH!

I just wanted to give a shout-out to the Calverton site run by Cheryl (who does a fabulous job). I don't know all of the staff, but I will say every staff member that picks up T is friendly and engaging. I'll name a few of our TOP favorites!!!! Krystal, Cierra, Lavonne, Debbie, and Lynell. These staff members should be CELEBRATED for a job not always so easy and certainly not always recognized, but should be rewarded every so often like you do here with DSP week!!!! Again the people named are only a few of our favorites that go ABOVE and beyond. Lavonne has drove over on his own time in his car to drop off something T has forgotten. Krystal bought T a stuffed animal that to this day is T's BEST FRIEND!!!! Debbie is the sweetest and T just enjoys them ALL!!!!

Christine Barr





# THANK YOU, LISA AND LEANNA!



RJ and Lisa enjoy going bowling, swimming, and hiking through wildlife refuges. RJ loves talking about their adventures together. Lisa is a fun, loving, and caring person. RJ always has a blast with her! We are thrilled that she is working with RJ!

RJ and Leanna enjoy going on hikes and out to dinner. They are big fans of the Beatles! Leanna is such a sweet, kind, and compassionate person. RJ loves spending time with her. We are so thankful to have her working with our sweet boy!

Sandy & Rich Larsen







This is RJ and his AMAZING staff and friends at Rise Life. He absolutely loves it there!

## THANK YOU, RENEE!



Renee Baskerville helps me out with everything, including cooking, money management, and doctor appointments. She supports me in everything. She is an awesome person.

-Betsy Weinberger, Self-Direction Services Participant



# THANK YOU, DREW!

My son, Robbie Phillips, is fortunate to have Drew Slack as his DSP! Drew began working with Robbie two years ago and Robbie, as well as our family, has greatly benefited from their relationship!

Drew is kind, patient, intuitive and a fantastic role model for Robbie. Drew has enabled Robbie to do all the activities he enjoys, such as running, hiking, biking, working out, canoeing, arts and crafts, and going to the movies. They food shop and prepare meals together as well! In addition, it is now Robbie's job to pick up the family's Friday night pizza. Drew showed him how to appropriately greet the pizzeria staff, purchase the pizza, and receive the receipt and change. Robbie is so proud when he comes home with dinner!

One of the best parts of their relationship are the long discussions they have about Robbie's world and the world around him. We have seen such an increased awareness about the world as well as so much personal growth in Robbie!

Thank you, Drew, for all you do for Robbie!

Sincerely, Kim Phillips (Robbie's mom)



(In the photos: Drew and Robbie work on Christmas decorations, Robbie and Drew finish a road race, and Drew helps Robbie navigate across a small stream in Vermont.)



# THANK YOU, ALANA AND MADISON!

This is my son, Joey, and the two girls are his support staff, Alana and Madison, who I am very blessed to have working with him. I want them to know that they are very helpful and I appreciate them so much. Most of his needs are physical so they both work with him and they help me out so much. Joey is very happy to spend his time with them! A big thanks to Alana and Madison. Thank you for all you do. You are truly appreciated and loved!



# THANK YOU, EIGHT BELLS!



This is a shout-out to say thanks to all the DSPs at Eight Bells! Ronnie Myers has been a wonderful House Manager/Senior DSP! He has helped create an atmosphere of positive energy in the house. Ronnie is always happy to answer any questions we might have and to help in any way he can to make Eight Bells a happy place for the individuals who live there. We were also very excited to welcome Andre Alexandre back to Eight Bells. Paul and Hava both love having him there again and he has always been a favorite of our family. Ann Smith never fails to be willing to help

and to tie up loose ends. All the DSPs at Eight Bells have worked really hard to support our family and we are truly grateful to each and every one of them. They help us to have peace of mind.

We also want to thank all the DSPs at CAP, Nicole, John, Kelly, and everyone. Paul and Hava absolutely love being there every day and look forward to all the activities, opportunities to be creative, and participating in the talent shows. Thank you to everyone there.

To the right is a picture we took of Ronnie recently with some Girl Scout cookies we donated to the guys at Eight Bells.

Frank & Roseann Forziano





# THANK YOU, DINA AND DANIELLE!



I am so thankful for Dina DelGiorno and Danielle DelGiorno for working with our son Derek. They are both hard working and very attentive to all Derek's needs. They swim in the summer, go on car rides, take trips to the barber shop, go on walks to the high school, and just hang at home.

Thank you for all you do!  
Love, John & Debbie Gatta

On behalf of all of at EEDA Team FI and Community Habilitation Services, I want to thank you for all you do. So many people rely on you and even though we may not see you all the time, we are well aware of the wonderful services you continue to provide. Our participants and families are grateful for all that you do, as are we. These services wouldn't be so successful without your efforts and hard work.

So again, thank you so very much.

Diane Lagoumis

Director of Self-Directed Services/Fiscal Intermediary



# THANK YOU, HEATHER AND CHRIS!

## When One Window Opens, Two Step In (or, Our Incredible DSP Staff)

Occasionally the stars and planets align to open a window and bestow a gift (or two) at the most random of times but indeed with purpose; such is the case with our DSP staff members Heather Merrigan and Chris Higgins. Both are actually from our same town and attended high school with Matthew. Heather and Matt had been in the same science class and Chris was part of the football team that Matt managed. It was not for several years after each had graduated that their paths converged again, and the manner in which both came to work with Matthew is a lesson in finding staff in these challenging times.

The window for Heather's entry onto Matt's team began when her mom was dog sitting Matt's trusted companion and crazy goldendoodle, Gansett. I brought Gansett to the Merrigan's home and saw a beautiful picture in the dining room. I asked Kathy about the artist and learned that it was her daughter Heather, who I remembered as being a kind girl in my younger son's grade in elementary school. I inquired as to what Heather had been doing since high school and her mom told me she graduated with a degree in art and was trying to determine what to do next. I mentioned that Matt had just registered for this great art program called Artability at the Spirit of Huntington Art Center and asked if she thought Heather might be interested in working with and attending the art program with him on a weekly basis. Her mom indicated that she thought Heather would be interested and would have her contact me. When she did, I explained the process of becoming a DSP and that it would involve meeting and interviewing with Matthew. It was shortly thereafter that Heather began the process, and stepped right through that newly opened window and into our lives. Life has been neither the same nor boring since!

Matthew and Heather have melded into quite a "dynamic duo" and never shy away from involving themselves in adventures in and around the community in which we live and beyond! Yes, they not only attend the Spirit of Huntington Art Center programs on a regular basis but also have attended an art show in NYC; taken up the invitation of an artist to visit her studio in East Hampton Springs; volunteered for a camp; attended boot camp and basketball programs; done a great deal of park exploration; attended social events and game nights; participated in cooking classes, and met up with Matt's friends. Heather's involvement in Matt's life has expanded both of their worlds and as she tells it—her ordinarily more introverted self has stepped outside of her comfort zone and into a world of people and activity as a result of working with Matthew. The way Matt tells it, Heather is an awesome friend/staff member who is no pushover and "calls him out on stuff he can definitely do by himself" that will in the end help him live more independently.

I had mentioned to Heather early on that she should feel free to bring ideas to us with regard to activities and expanding the "team" and she has not let us down in that role either! Heather mentioned that she'd been speaking with one of her friends, Chris Higgins, about her "work" with Matt and he seemed interested in joining the team. When she mentioned it to Matt, his face instantly lit up as he remembered Chris from their football days in high school. We set up an interview and it was clear from the first moments of that meeting—these two were also a good match. Heather had provided Chris with a lot of background information with regard to the application process and he began it right away. He had previously been approved through another FI to work with another friend of Matt's so he understood the process.





***Matt and Chris taking in a recent Ducks Baseball game***

The window reopened and through it walked another member of Team Matt, and one who provides a much different level of activity and fulfills other roles in Matt's life.

Matthew and Chris not only share a commonality of love of sports, but also a quest for good health; they take advantage of Matt's gym membership and attend the gym together several hours a week, often running into some friends from town or former teammates. Chris recognized that Matthew needed some modification to his routine and set up music on the iPhone (using earbuds), which Matt listens to on the treadmill. Finding things to talk about and laugh about is never a problem for these two guys; the latest video games and anime are frequent topics. Chris also recognized Matt's interest in animals and in marine life in particular, so they can be found at animal sanctuaries and nature centers located throughout Nassau and Suffolk. Chris is incredible at helping Matt read social cues in different environments without making Matt feel uncomfortable, which is an incredible skill and gift. This fall the "tenacious twosome" will be heading off for an eight week session of full-day adult continuing education classes offered at SUNY Stony Brook. One of the classes is of interest to

both Matthew and Chris due to their shared appreciation of the subject matter, The Works of Tim Burton. The other class is Creative Writing, which will hopefully hone in on Matthew's skills as an aspiring author and allow Chris to develop his skills as a "creative consultant" to Matt's ideas. The two will also be participating in a Personal Money Management class being offered by Nassau County PAL Special Needs Unit.

What Matthew and our family appreciates most about Heather and Chris is the positive aura that surrounds them both when it comes to participating in Matt's world. We as a family have grown exponentially in our ability to promote independence in Matthew and in truly enabling his ability to live a self-directed life, with the help of these two incredible people who have embraced and enhanced their roles as DSPs. Thank you to East End Disability Associates for allowing us this opportunity to highlight their incredible work!



***Matthew and Heather in front of Matt's piece at Agora Gallery in NYC***

# THANK YOU, DSPs!

During this very special week, I would like to take a moment to thank each and every Direct Support Professional at EEDA.

Every day you work tirelessly to ensure the folks we support lead the most fulfilling lives. You assist them in achieving both small and large milestones, always with a smile on your face and a hand to lend each other. You show each person the utmost care and compassion, even during the most difficult times. Although this year we continue to see cases of Covid-19, you have all proven

time and again that you will do anything that is necessary to keep our folks safe and healthy. You have assisted people in wearing masks, washing hands, social distancing, and cleaning; all while ensuring everyone still goes out into the community and works on their personal goals. You have assisted the folks we support in participating in meaningful activities at the sites, in their homes, and in the community. Most importantly, you have all created long-lasting, positive experiences for everyone we support, and this does not go unnoticed!

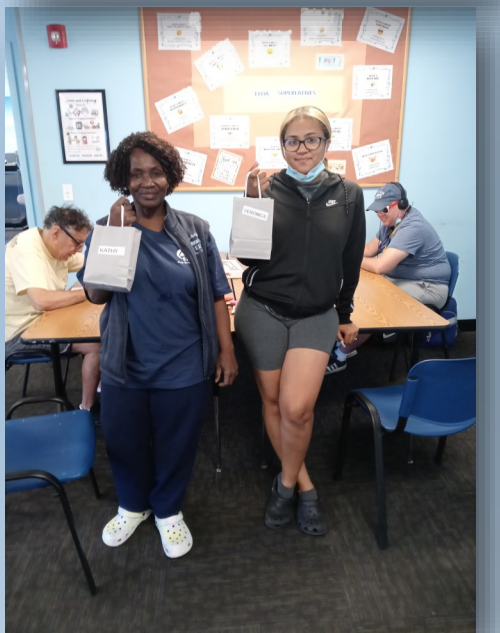
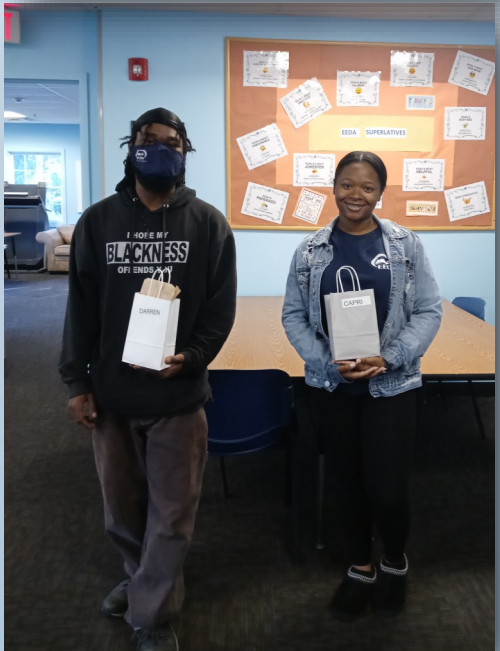
You are all a shining example of the EEDA Values: Professionalism, Honesty, Respect, Pride, Compassion, Creativity, and of course Good Humor. We are grateful for you all.

Lisa Kennedy

Associate Director of Day Services

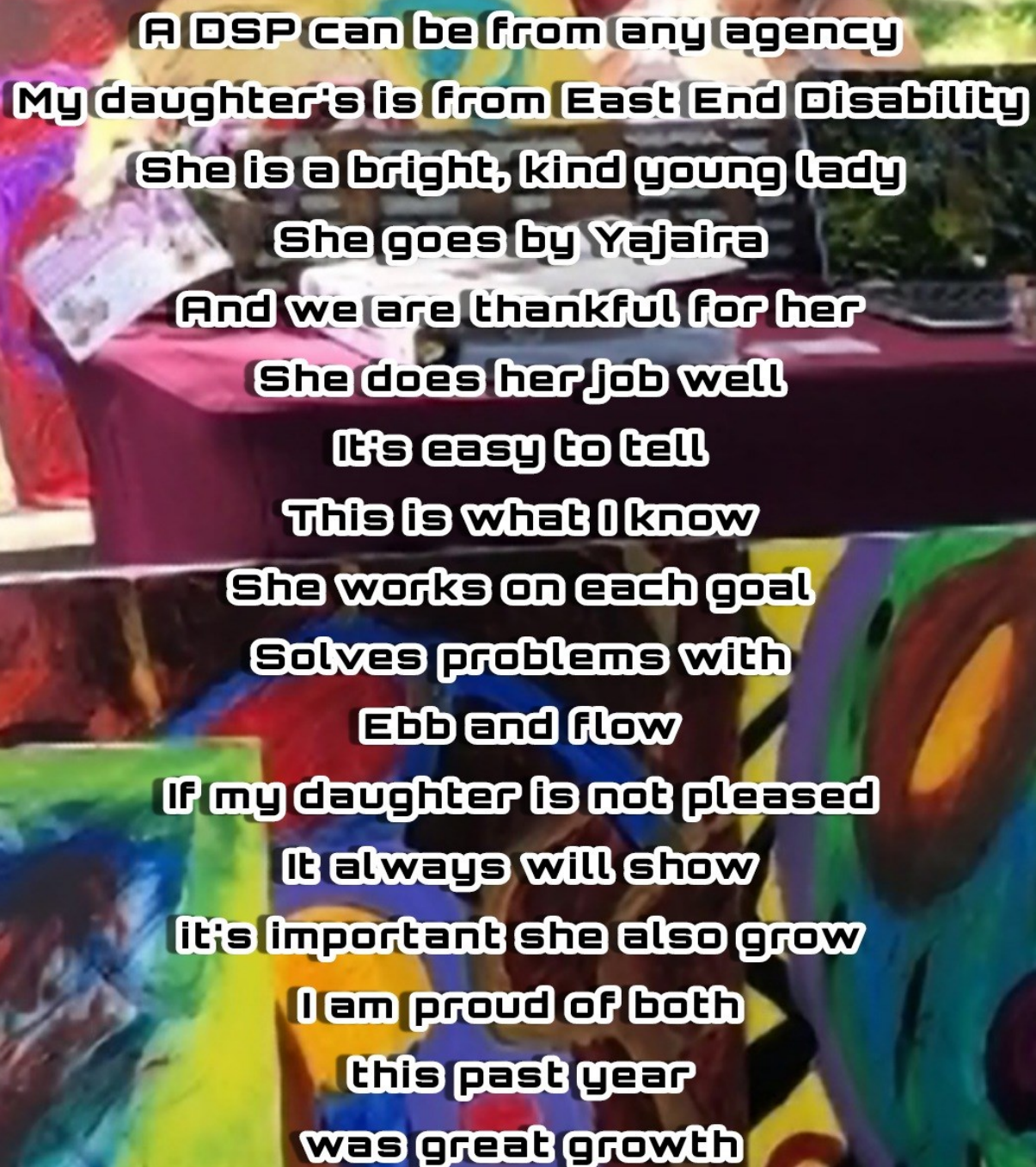






**THANK  
YOU, DSPs!**





**A DSP can be from any agency  
My daughter's is from East End Disability  
She is a bright, kind young lady  
She goes by Yajaira  
And we are thankful for her  
She does her job well  
It's easy to tell  
This is what I know  
She works on each goal  
Solves problems with  
Ebb and flow  
If my daughter is not pleased  
It always will show  
It's important she also grow  
I am proud of both  
this past year  
was great growth**



# ANNUAL PICNIC



EEDA's annual picnic on July 29th was a great time for all. This year, the programs created signs and decked out in Mets gear to help celebrate Gus Lagoumis's retirement and give him a proper send-off.





# Mister Softee



EEDA staff and program participants were treated to a sweet treat for DSP Recognition Week with Mister Softee making an appearance at the day programs.





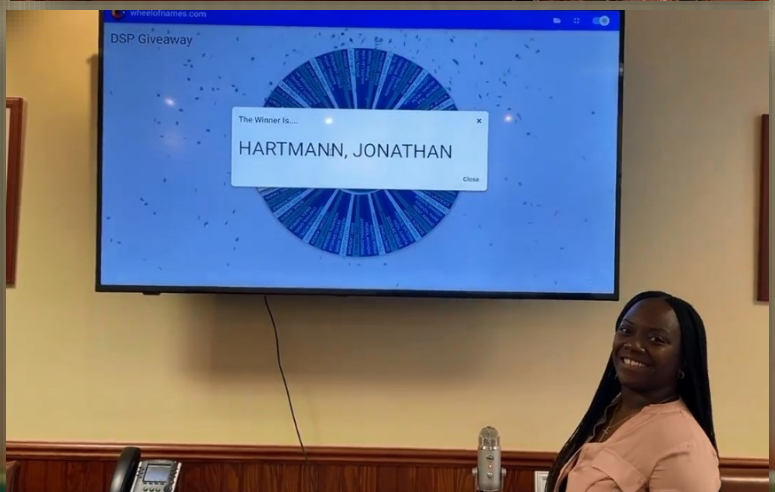
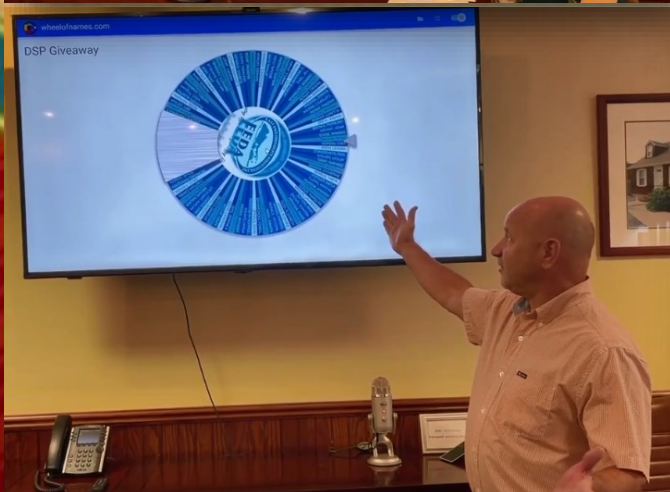
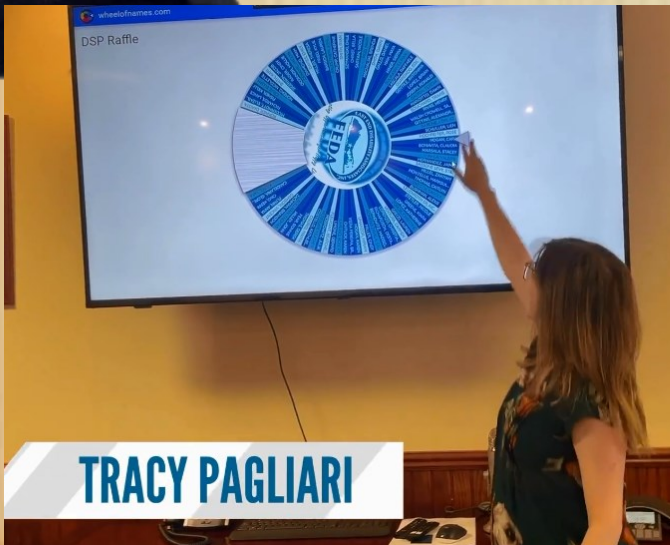




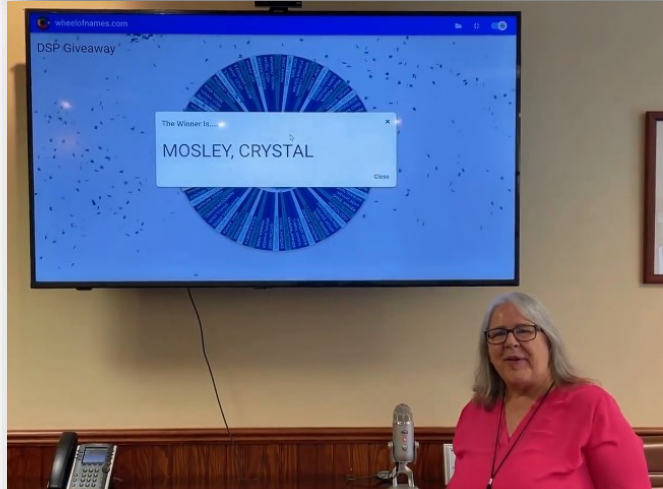
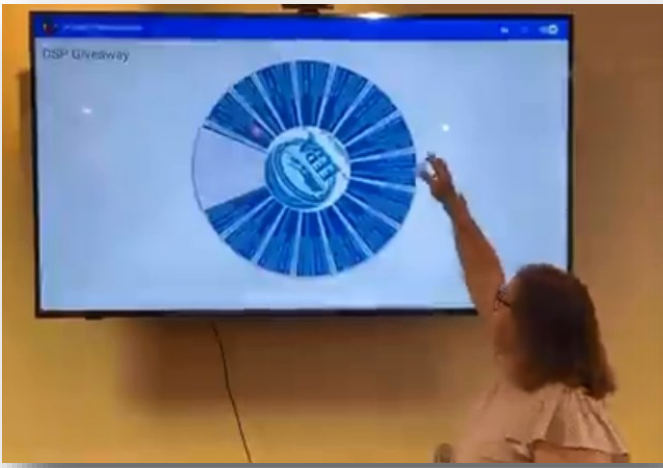


# DSP WEEK RAFFLE WHEEL

Ten Lucky winners picked from the spinning wheel won a \$25 Visa gift card throughout DSP Recognition Week on EEDA Cares. Congrats, everyone! Special thanks to our “Vanna White” presenters, Lisa, Joy, Tracy, Diane, Joann, Linda, Shaunice, John, Lynn, and Jeanine.







**CONGRATS SPINNER WINNERS:**

**Monday–**

**Jada Barrow, Michelle Pandolfo**

**Tuesday–**

**Cody Hopson, Alexis Rivera**

**Wednesday–**

**Jonathan Hartmann, David Scotto**

**Thursday–**

**Mary Schwartz, Crystal Mosley**

**Friday–**

**Capri Bartlette, Kerri Cino**





*Creating Opportunities for Happy Lives*



DSP RECOGNITION WEEK  
September 11-17, 2022

ANCOR | RELIAS

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**EEDA Advisory Committee**

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