

[NYAPRS Enews] Harvey Rosenthal Awarded Advocate of the Year Award at DREAM Symposium!

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on behalf of

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Yesterday marked the second annual DREAM (Disability Rights & Employment Awareness Month) Symposium, dedicated to recognizing the rights of individuals with disabilities, celebrating the invaluable contributions they make to the workforce, and facilitating connections between potential qualified candidates and employers.

Our own, Harvey Rosenthal, Chief Executive Officer of NYAPRS, was awarded the Advocate of the Year Award for his tireless efforts on behalf of New Yorkers with mental health, substance use, and trauma-related challenges.

The event included:

- An **in-person vendor fair**.
- An **in-person job fair**, sponsored by the Department of Labor, at which dozens of employers who already recognize the value of hiring of people with disabilities, were there to welcome job seekers.
- Six workshops of interest to New York's disability community, most specifically pertaining to the improvement of the low employment rate of people with disabilities.
- A disability history exhibit.

NYAPRS is strongly dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities which includes advancing employment opportunities in the most integrated settings, and we are unwavering in our commitment. New Yorkers with disabilities are counting on us to ensure that we are doing everything we can to honor their rights, especially their right to work.

Harvey has embodied this unwavering commitment throughout his career as a staunch advocate for the inclusion and rights of people with disabilities. He reiterated his and NYAPRS' commitment to support New Yorkers with disabilities

right to live and work in the 'most integrated setting' through the creation of a new state Olmstead plan. We are incredibly proud to have Harvey recognized for his tireless work, leadership, and advocacy. See below to read Harvey's written remarks for the award acceptance.

DREAM Symposium Awards Thank You Message
October 3, 2023

Thank you so very much for conferring this special honor upon me and our broader NYAPRS advocacy community.

While I regret that I couldn't be with you all today, I am deeply grateful for the Governor's recognition of the critical importance of employment in advancing the dignity, health, recovery and community success of New Yorkers with disabilities, and for her resolve to see that supporting our right to work is considered a top priority of her Administration.

We greatly appreciate this essential focus on rights when we talk about Disability Rights and Employment Awareness Month and this Symposium, as promoting and protecting our rights has always been a central element of NYAPRS' movement and mission.

That's why NYAPRS and I and our partners in the independent living community were willing to get arrested at the Capitol over 20 years ago to win state adoption of the Medicaid Buy-In program that allows people with disabilities to go to work without fear of losing essential healthcare benefits. Towards those ends, we're very grateful to the Governor and to Kim for their expansion of the Buy-In program in this year's budget.

It's also a fundamental reason why we have worked so hard to see the adoption of a revised state Olmstead Plan in our role on the state's Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council, a plan that derives its authority from the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Employment has always been a top priority for NYAPRS and, in that spirit, we have been very thankful for the opportunity to help lead the MISCC's employment subcommittee. Accordingly, I'd like to acknowledge and provide great thanks to NYAPRS COO Len Statham for his dedicated leadership here.

There is widespread agreement that the MISCC's success will be measured by the creation of a new Olmstead Plan that lays out specific measures to evaluate the progress we make each year to advance the rights of New Yorkers with disabilities to live and work in that 'most integrated setting.'

In doing so, the Plan will provide us with an annual score card that shows us how many New Yorkers with disabilities moved from idleness to opportunity and independence and from a life in segregated day programs to one as a working

member of one's community. Moreover, having a clearly defined Olmstead plan, will ensure older adults, and people with disabilities of all ages have a right to live in the community with appropriate supports, rather than to be institutionalized.

We look forward to working very closely with the Administration and our state agency and advocacy partners to put such a plan in front of our disability community in the coming year.

Thank you so much for this great honor. I look forward to being with you all at next year's Symposium.