

2010

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

irwin siegel agency, inc.

DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL

Recognition Awards

ISA is pleased to announce the 2010 winners and runners-up for Irwin Siegel Agency, Inc.'s Direct Support Professional Recognition Award. All nominees possess the exceptional qualifications and dedication necessary to make a difference in the lives of the clients they serve. While this made the selection process challenging, it also demonstrated that there are many skilled and dedicated individuals working to support others.

Join us in congratulating the winners

Isabel Chica

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind

Dytra Hales

Individual Support Systems

Brandon Schoonmaker

Ulster-Greene Arc

Each winner received a monetary award, a plaque, and a subscription to Frontline Initiative

Also honored are runners-up

Patrese Brown

Southeastern Virginia Training Center

Samuel Hundeyin

Melmark, Inc.

Wilton Robinson

AHRC Nassau

Each runner-up received a monetary award, a commemorative certificate, and a subscription to Frontline Initiative

ISA would also like to thank all of the nominees and DSPs in the field for the amazing work they do

2010 DSP Winners

Isabel Chica

Isabel Chica has worked at the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired since 2003. Isabel has two sons who are visually impaired. This aspect of her life left her with a fierce passion for serving children who are blind or visually impaired as well as give others the hope, confidence, and tools they need to help their children. With Isabel's help, parents have learned how to advocate for their child. Her knowledge of early child development has enabled her to teach these parents how to understand age-appropriate cognitive, fine and gross motor skills in order to help their children enter school without suffering long-term developmental delays.



Isabel manages the children's department at Miami Lighthouse. In 2003, the blind babies program served 60 blind babies and their mothers. In 2009 that number increased to 205. Isabel was instrumental in advocating for and starting weekly playgroup sessions where children participate in different playgroups stimulating their fine sensory motor skills and developing their social

skills. Parents also participate and learn different techniques to further stimulate their child at home. The play group was featured on NBC in June 2010.

Isabel's collaboration with parents, caregivers and teachers has led the Summer Training and Recreation Program (STAR) to be a huge success. STAR is a fun and educational experience for the children who participate. Ms. Chica holds a Bachelor's degree in Education, a Master's degree in Reading Education, she completed the VIISA Program curriculum for family centered intervention for infants, toddlers and preschoolers who are visually impaired as well as INSITE; a resource curriculum for use with families who have children ages 0-5 who are deaf, hearing impaired, blind or visually impaired with additional disabilities. Isabel's extensive education has enabled her to research and implement an evidence based curriculum for children ages 5-13. Isabel has not only worked with over 200 families seeking professional guidance, she also provided in-service trainings to more than 125 professionals who are visually impaired or blind.

Isabel's warm, charismatic spirit welcomes others to express their concerns and ask for advice. Her experience and wealth of knowledge shines through when she speaks to parents. She is highly creative in developing material for playgroup and is deeply committed to helping children achieve independence. Isabel is always willing to go the extra mile, and is full of love and compassion for her job. Isabel sees people for what they can become and she tirelessly dedicates herself to ensuring each child lives up to his/her ability.

"Providing direct services to children who are blind or visually impaired provides one with both personal and professional life changing experiences. As an early interventionist my experience with families usually occurs when a child has just been diagnosed. As a direct service provider I stay current with the issues my families face and maintain that personal connection over time that allows families to feel both secure and supported. As a professional who provides direct services I have always been humbled by the love and affection I have been offered by those I serve. On a personal level when I reflect on my life and career choice I know that I have made a difference in the lives of those I serve but more importantly those I serve have made a difference in how I choose to live my life in this world."

• Isabel Chica

Irwin Siegel Agency, Inc. is proud to support Direct Support Professionals and the wonderful jobs they do. That is why we created the DSP Recognition Awards in 2000. The award gives recognition to those Direct Support Professionals who have gone above and beyond what is expected of them to provide exceptional care to people with disabilities.

Self-Determination

Nominee demonstrates commitment to supporting self determination, self-esteem and meaningful choices for people with intellectual disabilities.

Leadership

Nominee exhibits leadership qualities with peers within his or her work environment and serves as a role model to others.

Inclusion

Nominee facilitates inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in all aspects of community life.

Professional Development

Nominee demonstrates commitment to his or her professional development by continuing to seek knowledge and gain skills in the field.

Provision of Direct Support

Nominee provides direct support in a manner that respects the dignity, culture and rights of people with intellectual disabilities. A nominee must be currently employed for a minimum of one year by a human service provider.

In acknowledging these Direct Support Professionals, we honor all DSPs for the tremendous jobs they do

We thank them as well as all the agencies that participated in our recognition program

**irwin siegel
agency, inc.**
insurance & risk management
human service programs

Irwin Siegel Agency, Inc. supports the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) and its mission to promote the development of a highly competent human services workforce, which supports individuals in achieving their life goals

visit www.nadsp.org for more information

Dedication

Support

Creativity

Care

Brandon Schoonmaker

For the past eight years, Brandon Schoonmaker has been a model of respect, integrity, compassion and excellence at the Ulster-Greene Arc (UGARC). Brandon's optimism enables him to put people at ease, finding the best possible outcome to any situation.

Brandon is always willing to take on added responsibilities and recently won the agency's "Month in May 2010" award. This award recognizes employees who go above and beyond their typical work. Brandon's level of dedication to the people he supports is unique. What has become known as "The Pants Story," speaks for itself in describing Brandon's creativity and selfless commitment to others. One day, Brandon was assisting an individual with a medical appointment. This individual, consumed with anxiety over the anticipation of the appointment uncharacteristically relieved himself. Since he did not typically have this type of accident, no extra clothing was brought along for him. Already anxious, the individual was now wracked with embarrassment and fearful of ridicule. Brandon brought the individual into the bathroom, and together they walked out; Brandon in his boxers, and the individual dressed in Brandon's pants. This story is indicative of Brandon's willingness to do whatever it takes; ensuring those he serves are able to work towards their goals in a supportive environment enabling them to grow as individuals.

Regardless of need, Brandon can be counted on to encourage and lend a hand to the people of UGARC. As a direct result of Brandon's efforts and abilities, several of the people he supports enjoy camping, fishing and nature whereas they were previously "too behavioral" to be involved in these activities. Brandon speaks from the heart, and is a morale booster by his mere presence. With his impeccable rapport with other staff, he is able to help his co-workers learn to become great DSPs, further enhancing the quality of care given. With future ambitions of becoming a nurse, people in need will continue to grow with the strength of Brandon's support.



"I started working in the field by accident. As part of a high school project I volunteered my time with Special Olympics. My experience working with individuals with disabilities was and still is rewarding in many ways. Everyone wants and needs to be treated with dignity, be respected, and fulfill their goals. I take great pleasure in working with individuals to help them achieve their goals no matter how small. Everyone's goals are different and I assist in every way I can to acknowledge what is important to them and help them live a full life. There is no better accomplishment than seeing a smile on someone's face when they have satisfied their dream of hiking a mountain, getting their fishing license and fishing for the first time. We are all here for a purpose and what better way to express this than by being a Direct Support Professional. As one of my goals I would like to further my education and go to school for nursing. I know I can continue to make a difference in people's lives."

• Brandon Schoonmaker

Dytra Hales

For over nine years Dytra Hales has been a person-centered, respectful and dedicated Direct Support Professional at Individual Support Systems. For the past seven years, Dytra has been supporting Ron, a 52 year-old man with developmental and physical disabilities.

The consistency and stability provided by Dytra's support provides Ron with a life that is fulfilling and productive. Dytra appreciates Ron's individuality and has a unique understanding of the balance he requires between privacy and the importance of supporting him through difficult times. With Dytra's encouragement to express his opinions, Ron gained control of the choices he makes creating a positive environment. Empowering Ron with these skills also taught him to address conflicts with others instead of feeling resentment leading to more positive behaviors and choices. Dytra also teaches Ron to independently complete his household chores increasing his confidence.

By accompanying Ron on a variety of community activities, he has become a regular at several local coffee shops, enjoys the zoo, the YMCA, and also shops for his own clothes and groceries. As a result, Ron has been able to maintain employment at a restaurant rolling silverware twice a week which has been very rewarding. Dytra also encourages him to maintain contact with his friends and family. She continues to respect Ron in all aspects of his life.

Dytra completed the Registered Apprenticeship Program for Direct Support Professionals, is a registered Journey Worker and finished 40 lessons in the College of Direct Support. In June 2010, she won five awards for excellence in Direct Support presented by the Kansas Mobilizing for Workforce Change group.

Dytra has been a positive role model for her co-workers and conducts herself with professionalism. She treats all people with dignity and respect. Her ability to model valued behaviors to her co-workers has gone a long way to Ron's supporters. In Ron's own words; "She makes me feel good inside. I can do things for myself. We can be open with each other. She is a very sweet person and I have come a long way working with her. She treats me like family."



"Many people who have developmental disabilities do not have many family members or friends that are a part of their lives on a daily basis. Therefore, they depend on Direct Support Professionals to be a constant in their lives... Ron and I have become close over the years and he often tells me that he looks at me as if I were his 'second mom' even though I am much younger than him. It is comments like those that reassure me what I am doing as a DSP is extremely important. I am a firm believer that in order to be considered a 'successful' DSP you not only have to be an open-minded person, but also have a big heart. I would say to anyone who is looking for a career as a DSP to grasp at the opportunity to change someone's life."

• Dytra Hales

2010 DSP Runners-Up

Patrese Brown

Patrese Brown, a Direct Support Professional at the Southeastern Virginia Training Center (SVTC) for 11 years, is a self motivated, respectful and gracious person. Patrese consistently goes above and beyond what is expected of her to meet the individual needs of each person she supports. Their unique preferences are her top priority when she is providing assistance. Described as one who will ensure the residents of SEVTC have opportunities to participate in all decisions affecting their lives, it is no surprise the individuals are noticeably happy when in Patrese's presence.

Patrese maintains a positive disposition towards those in her care as well as the staff she supervises. Her competence and energy makes her a valuable mentor for new DSPs. She ensures her coworkers understand that providing maximum participation in all activities is essential to the success and growth of each person served. Patrese is a natural leader with an intuitive nature and great empathy for the people she supports. These aspects of her personality enhance the care she provides as she continually creates opportunities for others to develop friendships within the community.

Patrese's hard work as made her an asset to SEVTC. She has worked to expand her knowledge and seek additional educational and training opportunities. Patrese not only completed training in promoting Quality through Person Centered Thinking and the College of Direct Support, she is also working towards her Master's Degree in Severe Disabilities/Rehabilitation Counseling. Patrese's continued dedication to individuals with developmental disabilities will positively impact the lives of countless individuals in the future.



"SEVTC has provided me with the foundation and the positive supports to continue my education. I will graduate this winter with a Master's Degree in Severe Disabilities/Rehabilitation Counseling. I plan on using my education to promote and facilitate self-determination, quality of life, and support life dreams of persons with intellectual disabilities. I enjoy all aspects of my job. The job is so rewarding, the smiles that you receive when you have 'done something right,' or figured out 'what is wrong,' is pay enough."

• Patrese Brown

**irwin siegel
agency, inc.**

insurance & risk management
human service programs

1.800.822.6272

www.siegelagency.com

Wilton Robinson

Wilton Robinson has been employed at AHRC Nassau for almost two years. As a Job Coach in the Supported Employment, he remains dedicated to ensuring quality outcomes for the individual he supports.

Wilton provides one-to-one support for an individual named Ryan at a community worksite location. Ryan has been working for an AMF Bowling Center as a part time maintenance worker. After only a few months of employment Ryan became part of the team at AMF, and began independently seeking new tasks. Although Ryan struggles with social aspects of his work place duties, under the guidance of Wilton, he is able to interact in a fun environment with coworkers his age. This has greatly increased his self esteem. Wilton has helped to instill a sense of responsibility in Ryan that has taught him the benefits of being a hard working and dedicated employee.

Wilton's "can do" attitude serves as a role model for his peers as well as the individual he supports. Wilton is receptive to learning. He regularly attends trainings and workshops and also shadows other Supported Employment staff. He accepts additional responsibility and assignments with a smile, often volunteering to provide extra assistance in other departments. It is no surprise his peers nominated him for "Employee of the Quarter."

Wilton is a caring and compassionate DSP who shows initiative and selflessness when working with the people he supports. His passion and sincerity are an inspiration to many.



"Working with people with disabilities is different from the other jobs I've had in the past. You learn about other individuals and can see that they are just like you and me. You can talk with them and have conversations to learn more about them as a person. The more time you spend with a person like Ryan who I assist at his job, the more you learn about them as a person and you learn how to help him better. It is important to have a job that makes you happy, it is a blessing to work here at AHRC and help people each day. I would recommend a job as a direct support professional to anyone that has a heart and the patience to help others."

• Wilton Robinson

Samuel Hundeyin

Samuel Hundeyin came to the United States from Nigeria. In 1999, he became a Residential Counselor at Melmark, Inc. After a mere three months of employment he earned a promotion to Lead Staff. Samuel's fierce desire to foster positive outcomes for people served inspired him to enroll in the Masters of Human Services Program at the Lincoln University of Pennsylvania. By accepting a position as a Behavior Specialist, he continues to work directly with individuals, helping to uncover their strengths while increasing their independence.

For several years, Samuel has volunteered in the Peer Mentor Program where he is able to guide new DSPs with his immense knowledge and natural ability to connect with the people he supports. Samuel's prevalent leadership qualities, self-determination and craving for success not only results in an exemplary level of direct support, but also creates an excellent mentor for his peers. Samuel always has a positive attitude regardless of what his day brings. His demeanor is felt among the clients he is supporting, and results in favorable outcomes for all. Samuel's genuine care for people served shines through in every task he completes.

Samuel is the first to volunteer when a student is having a difficult day, step in for another staff if they need a break, or stay after work to complete data and transfer of supervision to the next DSP starting their shift. His flexibility is indicative of his commitment to the people he supports. Samuel's unique passion for what he does at Melmark goes a long way in creating success for individuals with developmental disabilities. His dedication and hard work create a lasting impact on the lives of many.



"Working as a direct caregiver in the field of human services is highly rewarding. A direct caregiver is given the responsibility of playing multiple roles of: advocate, playmate, teacher, sibling, clinician, and more importantly, parent. It is a thing of joy to help those individuals who are constantly in need for help. Being a direct caregiver to individuals with developmental disabilities is not by any priceless, but a higher call to duty. The bond and trusting relationships developed as direct caregivers with the individuals we serve is everlasting. No other career could provide such opportunities."

• Samuel Hundeyin