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Unity House Staff Attend 2008 NYSACRA Conference



Bertot, Pearlman (standing, L to R)
Waldron, Flowers (seated, L to R)
at 2008 NYSACRA conference

AUBURN – Four Unity House of Cayuga County Inc. staff – Director of Quality Assurance Steve Pearlman, Oak Drive (Union Springs, NY) Individual Residential Alternative (IRA) manager Jessica Waldron, and Medicaid Service Coordinators Rashonda Flowers and Jaeseena Bertot – represented the agency at the April 15-18, 2008 NYSACRA Thirty-First annual conference held at the beautiful Sagamore Hotel in Lake George, N.Y.

Promoting the theme ‘E’s on Down the Road: Energize, Explore, Empower, Enlighten,’ this year’s conference emphasized the political and fiscal changes in the profession of assisting individuals with disabilities and how those changes challenge agencies like Unity House as it strengthens and expands its individualized services, programs, and supports. The conference’s theme was NYSACRA’s answer to meeting and exceeding those challenges, and the conference itself featured workshops focused on creating innovative solutions and possibilities intended to help individuals with developmental disabilities better achieve their goals of independent living.

“I attended the cultural diversity workshop and got several really good ideas on dealing with consumers who are different and who might present challenges in this area,” said Flowers. “It was very much worth coming to the conference for that alone.”

Bertot said a workshop she attended on meeting and overcoming the many challenges aging consumers present will help her plan the availability of the multiple services and programs some of her consumers will require in the very near future.

Waldron, Flowers, and Bertot also participated in the conference’s 5K ‘Fun Run,’ a walk and road race the proceeds of which will be used to support direct support professionals statewide.

Conference keynote speaker Derrick Dufresne, President and CEO of the Institute on Public Policy for People with Disabilities, encouraged conference attendees to take and put into action the philosophy of change vital to their agencies’ prosperity. In doing so, he declared, agencies will transform themselves organizationally and develop individuals with disabilities in new and unexpected ways.

On April 17 the conference featured the Capitol Steps, a troupe of former US Senate and congressional employees well-known for their satirization of politicians, the government, and government rules and regulations. NYSACRA’s Art Exhibit by Individuals with Disabilities and Reception also was held from 4-7 p.m on April 17.

The conference was closed by a partial preview of the emotional movie entitled “Body & Soul: Diana and Kathy,” the story of two remarkable individuals and their life together. The movie’s two protagonists joined the conference’s attendees to share their thoughts and discuss the preview with them.