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UNITY HOUSE DIRECTOR HONORED WITH AWARD

Darlene Podolak is named "Woman of Distinction" by Girl Scouts



Auburn, New York – Unity House of Cayuga County, Inc. Executive Director Elizabeth Werner is pleased to announce that long-time employee Darlene Podolak has been named a "Woman of Distinction" by the Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways. Podolak is a program director at Unity House, overseeing one of the largest departments within the agency. She will be honored at an award ceremony on June 15 at The Lodge at Welch-Allyn in Skaneateles.

"I have worked with Darlene for fourteen years, and I can say that I am a better professional because of what I have learned from her," said Werner. "I find her to be articulate and compassionate. Darlene embodies the mission of the Girl Scouts – she is a woman whose courage, confidence, and character make this world a better place. I couldn't be more pleased that she has been selected for this honor."

Darlene Podolak is the Regional MRDD (mental retardation and developmental disability) Program Director at Unity House. In her daily work, she supervises eight full-time staff, manages programs that serve nearly 200 MRDD consumers, and is responsible for one of the largest departments within the agency, comprising approximately 32% of Unity House's annual operating budget. Darlene has been with the agency since 1992, and serves on a number of councils and committees, including the Surrogate Decision Making Committee and Unity House's Consumer Advisory Panel. She holds a bachelors degree in music therapy from SUNY-Fredonia and a masters in management from Keuka College.

Darlene is also involved in the life of the Auburn community and her church, First Presbyterian in Auburn, where she has served on the Session and as treasurer for the

Board of Deacons. She is currently a member of both the Mission and the Scholarship Committees, and is a co-leader of the church's youth group.

In addition to her church activities, Darlene has taught a class on hand chimes for adults with disabilities through the Cayuga Institute of Living and Learning, is a regular blood donor through the Red Cross, and participates in area fundraising walks and runs – Warm the Children 5K, Camp Gregory 5K, CROP Walk – as well as Auburn's annual summer Great Race.

The Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways annually recognize women whose achievements personify the Girl Scout mission. Such women lead by example, encourage others to achieve their goals and dreams, and serve the community through personal, professional, and volunteer leadership roles.

For more information about Darlene Podolak or Unity House services, please contact Director of Marketing and Development Kelly Buck at 315.253.6227 x 313 or go to www.unityhouse.com. Additional information about the Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways may be found at www.gsnypenn.org.

Unity House of Cayuga County, Inc. provides transitional and permanent housing, rehabilitative, and employment services for individuals with mental health illnesses, developmental disabilities, and/or chemical dependencies from which they are recovering. A nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, Unity House partners with these individuals to develop their personal skills and potential, enabling them to live more full and independent lives. The agency serves more than 700 consumers a day in six central New York counties. Unity House is committed to freeing our communities of misconceptions associated with disabilities through innovation, education, and advocacy.

Unity House ~ Empowering Lives, Securing Futures