



# Spirit

## Trainer, Motivational Speaker Dan Howard Emphasizes Necessity of Staff Self-Awareness

“The work you have chosen and the jobs you are doing are the most difficult in the world,” declared Dan Howard to 105 Unity House direct support supervisors, managers, and staff at a two-part, all-day agency training seminar held May 28, 2008 at the First Presbyterian Church of Auburn’s conference room on South Street in Auburn. “With your jobs comes a specific set of expectations you also have chosen to accept, which makes it extraordinarily difficult to provide services to your consumers. I have come to believe that the single most important skill that you all must develop is a keen sense of self-awareness, to recognize constantly the impact your own behavior has on the quality of relationships with your consumers.”

Howard, a Geneva, NY-based trainer and motivational speaker with nearly 20 years of direct support



Trainer and motivational speaker Dan Howard (center, standing): self-awareness and attitude determine the capacity to teach effectively

experience (mostly within the ARC system) with individuals with developmental disabilities, focuses his trainings on the impact of staff attitude in the workplace, crisis prevention and intervention, and the importance of self-awareness in employee productivity. To him – and the message he conveyed with conviction to his Unity House audiences – in the direct support of consumer line of work, attitude based on self-awareness is every thing.

“It’s unacceptable to not have a positive attitude and positive behavior when working with consumers with developmental disabilities,” he told the morning and afternoon training session attendees. “We’re responsible for the impact of our attitude 100% of the time *literally* every second we’re in contact with who we serve. The single most important skill we can develop is a strong sense of self-awareness, through introspection and honesty with ourselves, and the skills needed to change attitudes and behaviors if and when they don’t meet the needs of our the consumers we care for.”

Howard believes 95% of the message direct support staff (and most human beings) deliver daily about their emotional status is conveyed in some way other than via a literal, verbal venue.

“It may be in something as simple as how we walk or arrive and/or behave at a staff meeting,” he said. “Or it might be in how we arrive at and/or conduct ourselves at a meeting, or in our personal grooming. Most of the time it’s unspoken but rather clear and obvious.”

He asserted that his focus and goal was to get Unity House direct support staff to recognize that their job is to respond to their consumers from their brains and not their emotions. He said direct support staff succeed when they do not come to their jobs as just themselves but rather when they learn to adjust themselves to work. Working with staff to accomplish that objective daily is a key challenge for direct support supervisors, he said.

Howard’s experience has led him to conclude that much of the challenge he trains about rests with the collective

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**Unity House**  
Empowering Lives. Securing Futures

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## Executive Director's Perspective

**T**raining. We all need it. Daily, weekly, monthly, yearly. From the cradle to the grave.

In our human services profession, especially when and where direct consumer care is provided, training is our lifeblood. It introduces us to our jobs and our consumers. It shows us how to best meet challenges and apply effective solutions. It gives us confidence in carrying out our duties, sustains us, and helps us help consumers and their families to accomplish. One of its greatest rewards is advancing occupationally, including financially. And it's a fact that, the more we train our employees to help them achieve and improve, the longer they stay with us and commit to a career in our vastly underrated profession.

We know that having a stable, effective, professional direct support workforce cannot be overstated in meeting our goal of assuring high quality care and, consequently, high quality of life for our agency's consumers. Our experience moving to an overall consumer-centered, consumer-driven care model espousing individual choice and embracing any and all opportunities for community inclusion has confirmed for us that ongoing training of all of our direct support staff is indispensable to our model's success. And, as stated, proven trainings also help us address and even resolve many of our direct support staff recruitment and retention challenges.

Continuing its commitment to ongoing staff development, on October 21 of this year Unity House will offer to its own and its peer agencies, direct care workers and frontline supervisors a follow-up training that will further enhance their already considerable skills (see p.3 for details).

Our day-long training will be provided by Dan Howard, an accomplished direct support professional whose background includes over 20 years of direct care and direct care supervisory and management experience, a majority of it within



*Joyce Williams, Executive Director  
Unity House of Cayuga County Inc.*

the ARC system. This past May, Dan engaged and taught over 100 of our direct care workers about the importance of being aware of our emotional and spiritual conditions always, in delivering our services to our consumers. Correctly proclaiming that direct support staff have the hardest jobs in the world, he emphasized the need for us to do all we can to ensure we are 'on the beam' each day, if we are to be effective teachers of our consumers and achieve their goals of growth and independence. Dan's presentation was electric, positively affected staff, and all but guaranteed his return. No doubt, his effort in May and his upcoming October training will strengthen direct support staffs and help ensure that they continue to provide the best consumer care possible.

We look forward to you and your direct care staffs joining us for what we consider an invaluable learning opportunity.

There is no substitute for effective training. It escalates the standards we set for ourselves and creates behavior that is positive and contagious. Within the next year, as a result of these latest trainings and other training initiatives we have planned and will soon offer, we expect our direct support staff will experience their own growth, to their benefit and that of our consumers and their families.

### **Click on [www.unityhouse.com](http://www.unityhouse.com)!**

Need information about our **MRDD, Mental Health Residential, G.R.A.C.E. House Alcohol and Chemical Dependency**, and **Unity Employment** services and programs? Want to become a Unity House supporter and make a secure donation online? Interested in our current job opportunities and details? Like to read about Unity House news and developments including consumer success stories? Just log on to our redesigned website at [www.unityhouse.com](http://www.unityhouse.com). Besides our three annual newsletters, we've also posted our new agency DVD 'Empowering Lives, Securing Futures' on the site for you to review and use. Click on [www.unityhouse.com](http://www.unityhouse.com) for all your agency needs.

## Motivational Speaker Dan Howard *continued from Cover*

set of life experiences that gives direct support staff employees their sets of beliefs, values, and attitudes that they at times impose on those they serve. Whereas in other lines of work employees can arrive and remain unhappy and still get a job done, in the direct support profession such a situation cannot exist and result in consumer accomplishment, he said.

"Emotions are contagious," he observed. "Where in any consumers' individual service plan does it say you the direct support professional are having a bad day and you, consumer, you gotta' suck it up and tolerate me today?!"

Believing punishment of consumers never works ("It may motivate, but for it to endure and work, it has to be perceived by the consumer as severe, it has to be imposed on a timely basis meaning almost immediately after whatever led to the decision to punish, and it has to be applied every time when whatever occurs generates the possibility of punishment, meaning 24/7 with our consumers", Howard said), Howard repeated his experience that direct support staff's true role is to teach skills if consumers are to lead full and productive lives.

Howard left Unity House's direct staff employees attending his two sessions with the following guidelines

to effectively teach and interact with consumers with developmental disabilities:

- a direct support employee's job isn't to change the behavior of individuals he or she serves; it is to teach them skills they need to be able to change any current behavior that becomes harmful and/or has a negative impact on themselves or others
- direct support employees must operate with a consumer-centered focus which, in all treatment-care situations, ensures the needs of the consumer receive primary consideration
- direct support employees' focus should be on skill development rather than motivation through punishment

- don't prohibit the inclusion of artificial reward systems in individual service plans, but don't promote them, either
- attitude is the single most important characteristic in determining if a direct support employee will be an effective teacher
- direct support staff must ensure the safety of those they serve
- the safety of all direct support staff activity must be evaluated objectively
- to be effective teachers, direct support staff have to keep a professional, therapeutic relationship with whoever they serve that involves the emotional capacity to avoid interfering with the ability to provide effective service.

### *Unity House and R. Daniel Howard Training Solutions*

*Present*

## **Supervising Direct Support Staff in Human Services**

**Tuesday, October 21, 2008**

9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

The Point at Sand Beach  
Springside Inn, Auburn, NY

An all-day training by Dan Howard for executive management, managers, and front-line supervisors who oversee and provide direct service

*Training includes continental breakfast and lunch.*

*For details including registration and directions, please call Mary Fishlock at 315-253-6227 ext. 119*

## Fuel Efficiency Challenge Cuts Impact of High Gas Prices on Employees



AAA's Dave Bouvia

To help reduce the financial burden of high gasoline prices on its employees, Unity House launched a Fuel Efficiency Challenge in August that awards workers meeting

the challenge with the equivalent of \$75 cash towards purchases of that fuel.

The agency's challenge, requiring employees to accomplish four fuel efficiency tasks to become eligible for a \$75 gas card, is intended to help reduce staffs' personal transportation fuel costs, according to Unity House Executive Director Joyce Williams.

"We've created a fun and educational effort that will definitely help our employees keep more of their hard-earned money in their wallets and have fewer of their dollars going into their gas tanks," Williams said. "We have many employees who travel substantial distances to and from work and who also use their own vehicles while working. With gasoline prices being so high, this is becoming more and more burdensome financially. For the entire month of August 2008, by doing some basic things to become more fuel efficient, we also can cut down on this skyrocketing cost. We're challenging our employees to comply with four personal transportation requirements that make up our fuel

efficiency program and that also are proven to increase gas mileage. Unity House will distribute a \$75 gas card to each employee who successfully complies with these requirements."

The four parts of the agency fuel efficiency challenge included attending a one-hour, Unity House fuel efficiency educational seminar conducted by the American Automobile Association (AAA) certified instructor Dave Bouvia (which 103 employees took by 8/1); inflating your automobile's tires with air to the proper tire pressure or replacing the air in your tires with nitrogen; changing your automobile's air filter; and carpooling, bicycling, walking, or using public transportation to and from work for five days in August.

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## *Unity in the Community: Summer 2008 Events and Activities*

### **Cayuga County Day Hab Opens New Recreation Center Service**

On June 3, 2008 Unity House's Cayuga County Day Hab program opened a new Recreation Center service at its 31 Market Street location in Auburn. Operating from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, the Rec Center is a Day Hab supplemental service that provides an additional resource for individuals with developmental disabilities to participate in positive leisure activities with peers and enhance skill development.

Participants and visitors to the Center can take part in job club, craft, computer and Internet access, music, exercise, and healthy living education activities and classes. They also will be able to relax with peers and friends and develop their social skills in an unstructured environment.

A feature of the late day/early evening service is its consumer input panel, which affords participants the opportunity to make decisions about the service's programmatic content and other aspects and convey as much to a consumer liaison. That liaison, who comes from and rotates among the pool of participating consumers, works with



*Day Hab Rec Center staff, Leslie Brown (far left), Mgr. Angie Dudley (3rd from left) and Asst. Mgr. Jen Hilts (6th from left) open new service with participating consumers*

Rec Center assistant manager Jennifer Hilts to incorporate consumers' decisions into Center activities.

Providing light snacks as well as transportation to and from the service for participants, the Center accommodates up to 20 consumers at a time. Call 315-258-9531, ext. 216 for more information about the program including eligibility.

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### **Tompkins County MRDD Residential and Day Hab Services Participate in 2008 Ithaca Festival**

Twelve Unity House staff and consumers from the agency's Tompkins County MRDD Residential and Day Hab services took part in the June 21, 2008 four-day Ithaca Festival, a celebration of all things Ithaca held on that city's downtown commons and Stewart Park area.

Agency staff and consumers manned an information booth at Stewart Park and distributed over 3,000 Tompkins

County service and program fact sheets to Festival attendees. A highlight of the event was the agency's 'bounce house,' an inflatable 10ft by 10ft x 13ft structure set up adjacent to the information booth that attracted hundreds of children of all ages and helped generate traffic to and interest in agency services.

Staff and consumers received over \$200 in agency donations at this year's festival.



*Auburn IRA res. counselor Keri Lambertus (seated) with (standing, l to r) consumer Martha Bishop, IRA manager Sue McMaster, IRA res. counselor Deb Leone, and consumer Bev Lader at fundraiser*

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### **Cayuga County MRDD Residential Services Holds Successful Fundraiser**

A July 13, 2008 combination chicken barbecue, bake sale, and car wash staged by Unity House's Cayuga County MRDD IRA staffs and consumers at the Union Springs Volunteer Fire Department netted over \$1,100 to benefit those consumers' end-of-the-year activities. Sponsored in part by TOPS, Wegmans, and Johnston Paper, all of Auburn, and assisted by several volunteer firemen who barbecued the chicken dinners, the IRA staffs made a variety of homemade desserts for the bake sale portion of the event. Teams of staff and consumers managed the serving of chicken dinners, sale of baked goods, and car washes throughout the five-hour fundraiser.

Chaired by Cayuga County MRDD residential / Cayuga and Tompkins counties' Day Hab services Assistant Director Jessica Williams, the committee that planned the event consisted of Cayuga County supportive apartments manager Barb Gregg and residential counselor Kathy Sluzar; 62 South Street, Auburn IRA manager Sue McMaster and residential counselor team leader Keri Lambertus; Oak Drive, Union Springs IRA manager Jessica Waldron and residential counselors Vicki Jones and Brian Puccino; and New Life, Half-Acre manager Tammie Miner.

## Agency Holds Annual Staff Appreciation Event



(l to r) Employees Suarez, Podolak, Fellows, Becker, Klinnert, Dunham, Fisher (missing: Gallagher, House, Hudson) and others earned recognition for years of continuous service

About 100 Unity House administrative and direct care managers and employees met on July 18, at Myers Park on Cayuga Lake in Lansing, NY for the agency's nineteenth annual staff appreciation picnic. The four-hour event, planned and organized by a ten-person staff appreciation event committee that begins its work for each year's affair every January, featured a country western 'hoedown' theme, an outstanding catered food buffet, and an afternoon activity that included a dunking booth, water balloon toss, dance contest, and sack race.

"Our annual event is the least we can do to show our appreciation for our staff, which has the most challenging job in the world and which does its work with consumers so well, day in and day out," said Unity House executive director Joyce Williams.

One half-hour of the picnic was devoted to recognizing employees with continuous years of agency service. Besides recognizing the two decades of contributions made by Independent Housing Manager Judy Fisher, Williams lauded the 15 years of service from MRDD Residential (Cayuga County) and Day Hab (Cayuga and Tompkins counties) services director Darlene Podolak; ten years of service from eight other directors, managers, and employees (HR Dir. Catherine Becker, Facilities and Maintenance Dir. Gary Fellows, Tompkins County MRDD Residential Services Dir. Amy Dunham, Tompkins County MRDD Supportive Apartments Mgr. Val Klinnert and relief staff Mary Gallagher, Cayuga County Mental Health Community Residence service residential counselors Evelyn Suarez and Raven Hudson, Tompkins County Day Hab CIS Paul House); and the contributions made by an additional 15 staff who achieved five years of continuous service and another 25 who have worked for three straight years.

Twenty-six local and regional vendors and individual agency supporters provided a variety of door and raffle prizes given to attendees during the event's activities.

## Unity House's Mental Health IPRT Service Drop-In Center Relocates, Holds Events

On May 29, 2008 the agency's Drop-In Center, a vital part of Unity House's focus on supporting and rehabilitating individuals with mental illnesses, relocated to 90 Franklin Street in Auburn as a result of a space-sharing partnership it forged with the Calvary Food Pantry of Central New York. Both services realized their efforts emphasized community outreach and that working side-by-side, they could offer many benefits simultaneously to the individuals they serve.

Serving on average between 15 and 17 individuals three times a week (from 6-10 p.m. on Wednesdays and 10-5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays), in conjunction with the Cayuga County Mental Health Department's Social Club that originates from the department's Continuing Day Treatment program, the Drop-In Center provides an environment to learn



New Drop-In Center office and recreation space at 90 Franklin Street in Auburn

social interaction skills, engage in scheduled activities, and access staff advocacy.

In recognition of its new space and to supplement its annual budget, the Drop-In Center held an August 20, 2008 Open House from 6-9 p.m. and, with the Food Pantry, a chicken barbecue fundraiser on August 30, 2008 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Susan Sloan, director of Unity House's Mental Health

## Stardust of CNY, Schwartz Family Foundations' Grants Awarded

The Stardust Foundation of Central New York in Auburn and the Schwartz Family Foundation, formerly of Auburn and now located in Pittsford, NY, have awarded a total of \$9,000 to Unity House for the agency to enhance its already superior nursing care of its Cayuga and Tompkins counties' MRDD consumers.

With the \$6,000 Stardust Foundation and \$3,000 Schwartz Family Foundation awards, Unity House will purchase additional medical and information technology (IT) equipment for its nursing service to correct a critical direct care shortfall and to upgrade its capacity to teach and train staff. Consisting of NY State-registered nurses (RNs) and state-licensed practical nurses (LPNs), the agency's nursing service lacked an inventory of medical equipment sufficient to sustain and improve the outstanding care it provides some 96 adult individuals with developmental disabilities living in 12 IRA and 22 supportive and independent apartment sites in the two-county area.

The service also will use the funding to purchase IT equipment it has needed to efficiently and effectively train its direct care staff in the appropriate provision of medical care for these consumers, including administration of their medications.

Support Services, said between 30 and 35 Drop-In Center stakeholders attended the Open House to view the Center's new space and learn more about its service. She also said the Center's chicken barbecue sold some 300 chicken dinners, generating proceeds the Center and Food Pantry split and will use to enhance their respective services.

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# CIS Staff Tutor Trainings Underway for Tompkins County Day Hab Library Literacy Project

Nine Tompkins County Day Hab community integration specialist (CIS) staff - Carrie Hubbell, Shawn Wagstaff, Sandy Baez, Eileen Savino, Robin Chapman, Kelly Creamer, Megan Botto, Jamie Guernsey, and Eric Podolec - have undergone some 17 hours of training to become literacy tutors to consumers whose care and development they oversee.

The trainings, provided by Tompkins Learning Partners (TLP) Adult Basic Education Coordinators Arline Wooley and Barbara Hatt, represent the core of the programmatic component of the Day Hab's library literacy project, initiated in March and April 2008 by two grant awards totaling \$10,703 from the Tompkins County Friends of the Library Community Grants Committee and the Park Foundation of Ithaca, NY. As much the brainchild of the Day Hab service's consumers and families as it is of its staff and managers, the project combines new library space with a proven literacy program to improve consumers' literacy, job, and life skills.

The Friends of the Library grant was used to renovate program space at the service's 408 East State Street location in Ithaca to house new computer work stations with Internet access, bookshelves, books and other reading material appropriate to Day Hab consumers, and library furniture and furnishings. The Park Foundation award is being used to fund the TLP training of CIS staff to provide one-on-one literacy tutoring to Day Hab consumers. TLP also is advising Day Hab management on related project topics such as library inventory, teaching materials, and tutor observations. Goals of the project include increasing consumer participants' vocabularies and math and reading abilities; increasing their interest in reading independently; expanding their desire and opportunity to experience relevant learning activities; and improving their self-esteem and, where applicable, their job-readiness.

To date, the 17 hours of training have encompassed an April 12 through June 18, 2008 time period. Given CIS staff are well-trained to meet the



*(seated, l to r) TLP's Barbara Hatt, Arlin Wooley, CIS Carrie Hubbell and (standing, l to r) CIS staff Shawn Wagstaff, Sandy Baez, Eileen Savino, Robin Chapman, Eric Podolec, Kelly Kreamer, Megan Botto: learning to tutor and improve consumer literacy skills*

multiple needs of consumers yet lacked tutoring skills and knowledge to provide effective literacy tutoring, and TLP's Wooley and Hatt had the tutoring skills but not the special skills and knowledge to assist consumers with developmental disabilities, both parties realized merging their respective strengths would best achieve the project's goals. Covering a variety of topics designed to develop CIS staff tutoring skills deemed essential to effective literacy tutoring of individuals with developmental disabilities, the trainings have drawn universal praise among CIS staff.

"I've found these trainings unbelievably interesting and helpful, just very, very good all the way around," said Hubbell. "They will really help us reach the project's goals and heighten our consumers' development."

"They've been outstanding trainings, some of the best I've ever had," said Savino, whose professional life before entering human services included several years as an underwriter in the insurance industry. "Arline and Barbara and TLP have provided us with very sound structure within which to tutor. Before the trainings, I was aware of what we wanted to do as literacy trainers but didn't know how. I think I and my peers had the train tracks down but didn't have any stations along the

way or directions about proceeding. The trainings are showing us not just how to proceed but when and where and why. Our consumers will definitely be further empowered with these trainings."

"The trainings have given us great ideas," agreed Baez. "Besides a framework to work from we now know how best to assess consumer literacy skills, approach consumers when tutoring, and how to sustain our tutoring. We also have literacy lesson plans based on consumers' goals. The consumer I'm working with is moving from one-syllable to two-syllable words and we have a goal of completing short story book including having her illustrate it, if she can."

TLP's Wooley has been equally impressed with the CIS staff she and Hatt have been training, and their progress to date.

"The Day Hab CIS staff we are training to tutor is a wonderfully solid group who we're sure will take whatever they've learned from the trainings to date and use them to benefit their consumer' literacy skills," she said. "There's no question that tutoring them to tutor consumers has been the right path to take."

TLP will be training CIS staff and providing consultations to the project for another 25 hours through March 2009.

# Unity House Assistant Director Helps Rebuild New Orleans

“It was a volunteer thing, just giving back to those in need, and was lots of fun, too, a great experience, really,” smiled 25 year-old Louis Pelino, recounting the ten days he recently spent in New Orleans this past April as a member of a large group of volunteers from Ithaca, NY who helped rebuild that city’s seventh ward after hurricane Katrina struck and damaged much of it in August 2005. “I’d go back in a heartbeat.”

Pelino, an Endicott, NY native who moved to Ithaca not long after earning a Bachelor’s Degree in history from S.U.N.Y. Potsdam, has worked at Unity House’s Tompkins County MRDD residential services’ since June 2005, when he was hired to manage the agency’s Fayette Street Individual Residential Alternative (IRA) location. Since then, he has progressed to become the assistant director of those services while simultaneously earning a Master’s Degree in education from S.U.N.Y. Cortland.

was motivated to help Seventh Ward residents flooded out of their homes after listening to and meeting in Ithaca the pastor of a church that Katrina had destroyed.

“He heard about Ithaca Hours and the currency idea and thought it might be of use in his parish until every thing and everybody were back on their feet,” said Pelino, who counts a younger sister as his only sibling. “He also learned about Love Knows No Bounds and he basically came to Ithaca and requested a mission to help rebuild. I joined the group of 65 who volunteered to go down because it combined my desire to help get folks back on their feet with my love of the city and area.”

Pelino, who spends much of his free time writing songs and playing lead guitar in New York Rock, a band he started with some fellow musicians, was referring to time he spent in New Orleans as a high school student when his school’s jazz band visited that city.



*Unity House Assistant Dir. For Tompkins County MRDD Residential Services Louis Pelino at work in New Orleans’ Seventh Ward*

he slept on an air mattress on the floor of a mens’ dormitory at a Methodist Church about ten minutes north of the Seventh Ward, in a different part of New Orleans.

After volunteering, he said he took time to tour the city and was especially moved by what Katrina had done to its Ninth Ward, probably the section of the city most harmed by the huge hurricane.

“The ward was just one big, park-like space with nothing left but foundations of homes,” he remembered. “It was unbelievable, like everything that wasn’t bolted down had been swept away.”

The Seventh Ward has fared far better than that, he said.

“Two-thirds of the original population of the Seventh Ward has returned to live there again,” he smiled. “A big reason why is because of the rebuilding that went on and that’s continuing to this day. And volunteering spearheaded the whole thing. It really feels good to be a small part of that result.”

## Volunteer at Unity House

**Volunteer opportunities are available at our Auburn and Ithaca services and programs.**

***Call 315-253-6227 ext. 142 to learn more about them.***

***“Volunteering spearheaded the whole thing - it really felt good to be a small part of the result”***

The affable, 25 year-old Pelino’s New Orleans’ experience began with his Board membership at Ithaca Hours, an organization that started an Ithaca bartering system featuring a currency that is traded only within that city. His participation with Ithaca Hours brought him in contact with another Ithaca organization, Love Knows No Bounds, through which Ithaca became a sister city to New Orleans’ Seventh Ward after hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005.

Love Knows No Bounds raised \$30,000 to help rebuild New Orleans’ Seventh Ward. It also organized a group of 65 Ithacans, including Pelino, that it sent to the Crescent City on April 11, 2008 on behalf of its rebuilding effort. Besides his affiliation with Love Knows No Bounds, Pelino says he also

“I really liked the New Orleans’ culture, music, and food,” he says. “Going back, even after all the devastation, I knew there would still be some of each. I liked the idea of volunteering and also being able to revisit those things.”

Paying his own expenses down and back to New Orleans, Pelino said he and the group were put to work according to their skill levels and experience refurbishing homes.

“I spent time helping install new wiring and siding in the overall effort we made,” he said. “Before we started, the most skilled contractors scouted out the homes and neighborhoods needing to be rebuilt, and kind of established beachheads and set us up to do our work. It really was a team project.”

While part of the crew, Pelino said

# Unity House Participates in Direct Support Professional Week

On July 14, 2008, the United States Senate passed a resolution designating the week beginning September 8, 2008, as “*National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week*.” This was further supported with a proclamation by NY State Governor David Paterson who declared **September 8th –12th, 2008** as **Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week in the Empire State**.

Recognizing its direct support professional staffs and promoting the vital role they play in the lives of consumers and families, Unity House engaged in several activities for the week. These included service and program directors delivering cookie trays and handwritten acknowledgements to staffs of their invaluable contributions and recognizing direct worker staffs in a full-page ad shared with three peer agencies that appeared in the September 9, 2008 Auburn **CITIZEN**.

“This week provides an opportunity to shine light on our devoted professionals who dedicate their lives to those they serve,” observed Unity House executive director Joyce Williams in a direct worker staff memo that accompanied the directors’ and their cookie trays. “Unity House direct support professionals embrace the philosophy of commitment to individualization, independence, inclusion and productivity in living, learning, working and socializing for developmentally disabled individuals, those struggling with mental illness, and those in recovery from alcoholism and chemical dependency.

“Supporting, guiding, and ensuring necessary protective oversight is provided, direct support professionals allow those they serve to realize their full potential and live productive and meaningful lives,” she continued. “Our remarkable consumers and their achievements are a direct result of the hard work and diligence of our direct support professionals. The week’s activities are the least we can do to thank them for the wonderful job they do.”

*We are proud to salute our direct support professionals for their dedication and commitment to individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.*



With deep appreciation to our direct support professionals who are dedicated to providing high quality person and family-centered services in a warm and caring environment.



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The E. John Gavras Center is proud of our Direct Support staff and their commitment to be the leading advocates and providers of service to support all children, adults, and their families in their endeavors to overcome the challenges they may face in life.



The passion, skill, and dedication of our Direct Service Professionals are the keys that unlock the promise held in the lives of people with disabilities. We appreciate their commitment!

The U.S. Senate has designated the week of  
September 8, 2008 as  
*National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week*

 *Spirit*  
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