



STATEN ISLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

The Elizabeth Connelly Resource Center
930 Willowbrook Road – Building 41A
Staten Island, New York 10314
(718) 983-5276

August 2021

IRENE CAVANAGH
Chair
(718) 816-1422 ext. 1011

DIANE PERUGGIA
First Vice-Chair
(718) 984-0344

JASON HARR
Second Vice-Chair
(718) 720-9233 ext. 5044

DINA KLEIN
Treasurer
347-466-0882

MARYALICE FEGELY
Recording Secretary
(347) 393-6987

This year marks the 52nd year that the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Council (SIDDC) members have been supporting the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD) community. One would think that after so many years of educating the community regarding the needs of individuals with ID/DD and advocating for and developing services to meet the varied needs of a diverse population of individuals that our work would be done. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The work of the SIDDC is not even close to being accomplished and in fact, it is more important now to continue to advocate to preserve services in variety, quantity, and quality. To the parents who have adult children with ID/DD, you know the struggle, for the younger generations of individuals and parents, you are feeling the unrest of frequent changes in services, and for the very young families, the time is now to get involved because the future of our services is at a critical point.

I hesitate to even type the words, "new normal" but it is what we are facing. I believe that there will be many iterations to what a "new normal" looks like as we negotiate the ups and downs of this pandemic. What I do know is that the only way to conquer the challenges is to work together and that means families/self-advocates/guardians working closely with agencies and vice versa, as well as the agencies working closely with OPWDD, State Ed, DOH, etc., and vice versa. This new normal needs to be realized through the close contact and amicable relationships of all the stakeholders. When navigating this uncharted territory, the word kindness keeps coming to mind. The situation has been challenging for every single person in the world. These have been hard times and we will continue to ride the wave of this pandemic for some time to come especially, I am afraid here on Staten Island where we have experienced unique challenges different from the rest of the city and state.

Our Staten Island community is strong, and I have no doubt that we will conquer all of the challenges presented to us, but I am also completely convinced that to do that we need to come together. To that end, I thank our current members for their support, ask that you increase your involvement as well as help us increase the SIDDC membership by getting the word out and getting new members to join and become active. Yes, that is a lot to ask, but increasing the membership and everyone's involvement gives us the best chance of solving issues. There is strength in numbers not just for advocacy, but on our committees where a more diverse representation of the community will bring more unique ideas for solving the challenges that we face.

There was a shampoo commercial on TV when I was young and the motto was, "you tell two friends, and they tell two friends and so on" -- that is what we are asking. Spread the word, get involved and get others involved. Join the SIDDC as a member, join a committee, attend a rally, write a letter, speak for yourself as a self-advocate or speak for your loved one as their advocate, but now is the time to step up and be part of the solution.

I look forward to working with everyone during the 2021-22 year!

Irene Cavanagh, Ed.D.
Chair, SIDDC

Website: www.siddc.org

E-mail: contactsiddc@siddc.org