



work residential shifts, plan activities, order supplies and much more.”

**HELPFUL:**

“Thank you for being so amazing with all of our guys. You are always thinking of ways to brighten everyone’s day and are always willing to help wherever needed. I am so happy to be a part of this team with you.”

**COMMITTED:**

“The level of support and commitment have the men at this house so excited to meet even more of our Lexington family. I am truly honored and blessed to work with each and every one of you! Thank you for helping the men there be safe, have fun, and not skip a beat to get done what they had planned for the holiday weekend. Thank you for the amazing people you are.”

**NURTURING:**

“I would like to take the time and acknowledge this staff person for the amazing job she does in our homes... The people that live there have experienced some tough life experiences within the last year, as well as emotional challenges. She has helped them handle each of these events head on with a nurturing, compassionate, calm and supportive approach.”

**ADVOCATE:**

“She is an amazing advocate who pushes tooth and nail to make sure people are getting the level of care and support that they need, want and deserve.”

**INVESTED:**

“It was so clear to me that this staff member is invested in supporting a person wholly, in all aspects of her life and in all of her needs and wants. All I could think of after our encounter was how good it must feel to be supported by someone who wants to support you in all areas of your life that are important to you.”

**LOVING:**

“One of the biggest compliments in my book is when a family member has entrusted their loved one in your care, and then to be validated by them in such a loving and trusted way in return. It doesn’t get much better than that!”

**POSITIVE:**

“She always has a positive and realistic outlook and role models that to the ladies at the house. She never has the expectation of being recognized. For her it is just ‘another day’s work’ but for the ladies, she has made this often stressful pandemic manageable and even fun and magical.”

These are just some of the words that we can use to describe any and all of you. You have all continued, in spite of the challenges we have faced in the last months, to contribute so much to the lives of the people we support. You set aside your personal fears and continued to come to work to step up and provide what was needed. Your devotion and caring for the people in the Lexington family has been, and continues to be, exceptional and unmatched. You all work together to focus on ensuring that all the people we support are respected as individuals, empowered to make choices, and to learn the skills needed to improve and make their lives all they want them to be. And on top of all of this, you are devoted to keeping them safe and healthy.

How do you thank someone for all these things, and more? Please know that I am forever grateful, appreciative, and so proud of the work you do every day for the Lexington family. Thank you just scratches the surface of my gratitude to each of you 24/7/365.

Sincerely,

*Shaloni*

## #RISINGTOGETHER AT LEXINGTON!



- Great DSPs support people to pursue their passions and hobbies, and even share their own in the process! Nitza Gopi at Feura Bush noticed how much Lucille loved jewelry, and how important it is to her to add accessories to her outfits and always look beautiful. So, Nitza shared her hobby of making her own jewelry with Lucille! The two had a wonderful time together making beautiful custom necklaces that truly expressed their own personalities and tastes. Thank you, Nitza, for taking the time to connect with Lucille over something you both love!
- Great DSPs support not only everyone's health and wellness journeys, but also their senses of adventure! The team at Meco go on near-daily walks, hikes and community cleanups at countless parks, trails, nature preserves and other beautiful destinations throughout our region. Rain or shine, summer or winter, the Meco team never misses the chance to get their steps in! Thanks to the Meco team, especially Peter Giblin, Christie Maryea (pictured left) and Jasmine Tran (pictured right) for working so hard to find new places to hike and accompanying them on every trip!
- Great DSPs let people take the lead in what supports they want and what activities they do! Rachel has a dedicated team of staff who give her one-on-one attention and think outside the box to find fun, enriching and valuable activities and outings for her. They let her wants, needs, likes and interests guide everything they do! Just some of the things they've done this summer include going to parks, beaches, museums, aquariums and zoos, going on walks, picking berries, painting, gardening, crafting, baking, participating in volunteer projects and much more. Thank you to Miranda, Lisa, Rebecca and everyone else on the 26 Second Ave. team and beyond who work so hard to make every day meaningful for Rachel!
- Great DSPs understand help the people they support maintain valuable relationships with their friends and family! Recently, the men who live at Sacandaga wanted to reach out to their peers with gifts. When Tom came up with the idea of making cupcakes, Alyssa Murray was happy to help him bake and frost them. Then, the whole team went out and hand-delivered the treats to Northampton and Bridge Street. Thanks to Alyssa and the rest of the Sacandaga team for helping the men you support do something special for their friends!
- Great DSPs support people to get out of the house and take part in community events! Around this time of year, a popular destination is the fair. Jamie Bonner from Evergreen took Richard and Shirley to the New York State Fair at their request and they all had a wonderful time! They loved seeing all the vendors and attractions, and particularly enjoyed visiting with the animals. Thank you to Jamie and everyone else who has brought the people they support to the fair, the aquarium, the park, a restaurant or anywhere else they wanted to go this summer!
- Great DSPs help the people they support learn new skills and apply them to their daily lives! The Bridge Street team has done an amazing job supporting Mathew in building raised garden beds, planting seeds and tending to his vegetable garden, and it has flourished all summer! They have harvested produce from the garden and used it to make healthy meals for the whole house, incorporating some lessons on cooking and wellness into the experience. Pictured is intern Kailyn helping Mathew's housemate Cynthia make zucchini bread with zucchini from the garden!

## LEXINGTON'S THOMAS A. MAUL AWARD DSP EXCELLENCE AWARD NOMINEE: KYLE RIX



Every year Lexington nominates one of our amazing DSPs for The Arc New York's Thomas A. Maul Direct Support Professional Excellence Award, and this year we nominated Kyle Rix! Kyle has been with Lexington for 17 years, serving as a DSP and direct support coordinator in our residential program. For the past five years, he has been an integral part of the team in our Supportive Apartment program.

Kyle is the perfect team player, always willing to help out and establishing himself as a go-to person in a pinch. But more importantly, Kyle builds strong, supportive, honest and trusting relationships with everyone he supports. He is an active participant in each of their journeys to independence, and his influence on their lives is obvious. He has a talent for recognizing when people are struggling and helping them through challenges. When they succeed, he is their biggest cheerleader!

The people Kyle supports love him, look up to him and turn to him for advice and help. He is devoted to helping them be their best. He listens actively and helps them make decisions for themselves. He shares his interests with them and never hesitates to offer them hands-on help with anything they need. Jeff and Kyle love to talk to him about woodworking, which is a great personal interest of his. He installs air conditioners, fixes broken snow blowers, puts together bookshelves, moves people into new apartments, helps them add personal flourishes to their new living spaces and does anything he can to make everyone feel at ease. Kyle understands that the small details like these are the things that frame people's lives and make them happy.

Kyle's relationships with the people he supports are always positive. He takes the time to get to know everyone, even researching their diagnoses to better understand them and their needs and wants. It is because he knows people so well that he is able to help them so much. He spent hours talking Joe through a major life decision and went out of his way to offer emotional support to another man on the anniversary of his mother's passing. Kyle took him to visit his mother's grave and fill the bird feeder he made for her. Kyle was there for this man during a difficult time, and also respected his wishes to be as close to possible to his mother.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Kyle's value to his team and the people he supports has never been more evident. Whenever needed, he eagerly stepped up to work shifts throughout Lexington's homes during critical staff shortages so that people didn't go without the care they needed—days, nights and weekends. He also stepped up for the people who lived in supportive apartments and taught them the importance of COVID-19 precautions. Because of their independence, the people Kyle supported needed extra help during this difficult time, and Kyle was always there to update them on guidelines, gently remind them what needed to be done and help them become comfortable with keeping themselves safe.

But it wasn't only practical support Kyle offered during this time. Many people he supported were depressed during lockdowns, because they had worked so hard to be able to live so independently and were used to being out in their communities. Kyle was a shoulder to lean on and worked hard to lift everyone's spirits. He kept everyone upbeat and played his guitar or ukulele to break up the monotony of being alone at home. During a somber time, Kyle brought joy and positivity to many who had lost it.

Kyle has changed so many lives through his positivity, calm demeanor, many talents and devotion to the people he supports. He is a perfect example of the fact that sometimes it is the small acts of service, performed every day, that add up to greatness.

## A LOOK AT LEXINGTON'S DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

There are currently 1,127 Direct Support Professionals at Lexington, including those who work for Day Hab, Residential, Transitions, Clinical, Family, Employment and Support Services in Albany, Fulton and Schoharie Counties. Your years of service range from 45+ years (Sharon Diefendorf, Employment Resources), 42+ years (Lori Collado, Northampton IRA) and 41 years (Dana Walker, Schoharie) to eight new relief and full-time staff members who celebrated their first day at Lexington on September 7.

### YEARS OF SERVICE BREAKDOWN (AS OF THIS WEEK):

- 3 DSPs have over 40 years of service
- 41 have 30-40 years of service
- 49 have 25-29 years of service
- 58 have 20-24 years of service
- 104 have 15-19 years of service
- 119 have 10-14 years of service
- 204 have 5-9 years of service
- 549 have 1 day to 4 years of service

We are so proud that more than half of all of our DSPs have been with Lexington for more than five years, reflecting their long-term commitment to the people we support!

## DSP APPRECIATION TESTIMONIAL FROM CATHY AND MIKE NICOSIA

Cathy and Mike Nicosia, the mother and stepfather of Riley, who lives at Ridge Road, took the time to send the following letter to the Ridge Road team thanking them for everything they have done for Riley and his peers! Here's what they said:

"Thank you, thank you! I can't say it enough. You are all wonderful.

On behalf of Riley's family, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to you for all your dedication, professionalism and wonderful care you have given to Riley and to his most amazing three best friends, Ian, Tyrone and Mickey. We express our greatest gratitude to you all.

The team has demonstrated great group care in decisions regarding Riley's mental health, physical and overall family care. Knowing you all care for Riley is such a great and wonderful feeling for us. You all are truly great mentors for Riley, Ian, Tyrone and Mickey. That said, we love you all.

I acknowledge the dedication, care and true love the Ridge Road team has for all our wonderful guys. With this great team, Riley in 21 years at Ridge Road has grown and learned so much. He has shown such a great growth in his mental and behavioral areas. He truly has become a great and wonderful man. (Not that he hasn't always been to me!)

Thank you for being such a dedicated team with compassion. Thank you for going above and beyond when it comes to Riley and his needs. His needs are not always easy, but the team always finds a way. You are all amazing people!

Thank you so much!"

## CELEBRATE DSP WEEK WITH US ON WORKPLACE!

Direct Support Professional Recognition Week is this week, **September 12-18**, and we are excited to spend the whole week celebrating YOU! Your managers and supervisors have a lot planned to make you feel as appreciated as you are every day.

As the week unfolds, don't forget one of the most powerful ways to connect with other coworkers throughout the agency: **Workplace**! If you are able, please help us celebrate DSP Week by sharing the festivities on the "Lexington Champions" and "Lexington Happenings" Workplace pages! Here are some ideas for how you can use Workplace to celebrate direct support professionals:

- Post photos of any DSP Week parties, gifts, messages and other celebrations you experience at your worksite so everyone can see how appreciated you are!
- Post photos of DSPs doing all they do to support people throughout the day—both big and small—to demonstrate how essential and caring their work is!
- If you know of a DSP who deserves particular recognition for all they do, please shout them out on Workplace and tell us all what makes them so special!
- Share stories of special moments you have witnessed that were made possible by a DSP!
- Tell us what being a DSP means to you. If you are a DSP, why do you love your job? What has it taught you? If you are not a DSP, what have you observed about our DSPs? What inspires you when you see them at work supporting people?

Thank you for helping us all stay connected throughout the agency on this great social media resource. If you aren't on Workplace yet, please email Courtney Mickels Mickels at [mickelc@thearclexington.org](mailto:mickelc@thearclexington.org) for an invitation. Come join the Lexington conversation!