

A Really Cool SDMA Signing Ceremony!

Last weekend, SDMNy Decision-Maker Devon signed his SDMA at a truly unique ceremony, that ended (his decision, of course!) with a cooling dunk in a dunk tank. Below, his mom, Michele, who is also the Executive Director of Parent to Parent New York, reflects on the joyous—and fun—occasion.



Under gorgeous sunny skies and protected with face masks, Devon Juda gathered with those he had chosen to be supporters to sign and celebrate his Supported Decision Making Agreement over the Labor Day weekend. With the guidance of his facilitator, Patty Paduano of Saratoga Bridges, Devon spent close to a year carefully considering the types of decisions he may want assistance with, what type of help would be most useful, and who he would trust to support him in those decisions. On Sunday, Devon gathered with nine of his eleven chosen supporters (two joined via Zoom) as well as other close family and friends for the beautifully moving ceremony. The day started with Devon's Mom offering a few words of thanks to the supporters and all who gathered and then the official ceremony started with a touching Mark Twain verse read by Devon's facilitator Patty: "To live a fulfilled life, we need to keep creating the "what is next" of our lives. Without dreams and goals there is no living, only merely existing, and that is not why we are here." Once each supporter made a solemn commitment which included a promise to respect Devon's right to be his own decision maker and to never exert undue influence, the ceremony ended with Devon's older brother sharing a few words about his brother's journey.

Devon was also celebrating his graduation from high school and his move to the Transitions program at Lexington ARC. His Supported Decision Making Agreement will be a cornerstone of his work at Transitions as Devon learns the skills he needs to live independently, successfully move on to community college or work, and define for himself his life goals. To really cap things off, everyone gathered enjoyed an afternoon of dunk tank fun---Devon's dream come true for his celebration. What a lucky guy Devon is to have so many people cheering him on and willing to stand beside him in support as he embarks on this new and exciting adventure!