

MEET-AND WELCOME-JENNIFER IVERY

As we reported last week, SDMNY is moving into a new phase, designing and piloting a facilitation service delivery system that we hope will make SDM facilitation available to everyone with I/DD in New York who wants it. The model we're developing depends substantially on high-quality, centralized mentoring to ensure that wherever Decision-Makers and their facilitators come from, everyone will get the same excellent, authentic facilitation process. That meant that we needed an extraordinarily experienced, talented, and committed "Senior Mentor" to lead the work along with our own Joan Cornachio, who is now SDMNY's Associate Director. We all agreed that there was only one person who fit the job, Jennifer Ivery. We are thrilled that she accepted, and that her long time employer- our original partner in SDMNY, the New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation (the Alliance)-has been willing to "share" her to work half time with us in that position.



Jennifer has worked for the Alliance (a membership association of provider agencies) almost from the beginning of her career. Although she went to college majoring in journalism, she was drawn to work connected to our community by her mother, a nurse, who changed careers to help people with I/DD, who Jennifer says became her "second family". Spending time with that "second family" when she was a middle schooler and tagging along to her mother's workplace, then to the Alliance, and then, as well, to SDMNY, has been a consistent journey about helping others, and making a difference in their lives.

We first met Jennifer when, almost by accident, she accompanied a friend to our very first facilitator training, where our message of everyone's *human right* to make their own decisions touched her very big heart. The rest is history. She became a facilitator, and then a mentor, beloved by everyone who has come in contact with her. She says that although she loves all the work she's done for the Alliance for the past 22 years, her involvement with SDM and SDMNY has been not only incredibly meaningful, but truly transformative. We've learned a lot from Jennifer, not least the great way she organizes -and emcees (broadcast journalism training?)- SDMA signing ceremonies to make them the wonderful and meaningful celebrations that the Decision-Makers and their supporters deserve.



Family is incredibly important to Jennifer, who says her three children (one adult, following his mom's commitment to serving others as he works with un-housed people) and two teenagers are "her world." One of her favorite activities outside of work is family gatherings, especially monthly "game nights" that sound, when she describes them, like enormous fun. We were moved, but not surprised, to hear that, after their first child was born, and Jennifer and her husband wanted more children, they thought of all those who did not have families, and adopted the next two. Jennifer says of adoption, that while she may not have carried those babies in her body, she always carried them in her heart! She also loves nature, and photographing it. Check below to see two of her beautiful photographs. That's the kind of incredible person Jennifer is, and we are so fortunate and grateful to have her as a colleague in this critical new position.

WELCOME JENNIFER, AND THANKS FOR MAKING SDMNY PART OF YOUR FAMILY!