

SPOTLIGHT ON A GREAT FRIEND AND ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER

We've been fortunate to have had a truly wonderful—and incredibly helpful—Advisory Council from the very beginning, and we thought it might be interesting to spotlight some members from time to time. This week we were inspired by an email from one of our earliest, and most called upon members, Katie Riordan, letting us know that she would soon be leaving her position as Associate Head of Cooke Transitions and moving to Lake George (which, fortunately, is both beautiful and still in NY, so it works for us!)



We first met Katie in 2016 when beginning what would become an incredibly rewarding partnership with Cooke. Born and raised in Brooklyn, she has an MSW from NYU and a Masters in Educational Leadership from Fordham, both of which she has put to great use at Cooke where she rose from an Adaptive Skills Instructor to her present leadership position. Katie first worked with people with I/DD when she volunteered at an upstate summer camp while still a teenager and reports: “Those first weeks changed my life! I learned what it meant to live by the golden rule, and I carry that lesson with me to this very day: treat one another as you would like to be treated.”

She's carried that lesson throughout her career, and sees SDM “at its core [a]s exactly what we work so hard for our students to do at Cooke.” About SDMNY she says “We share the same core values: that all people should be the main voice about the direction of their lives, how they want to spend their time and whom they want to have surrounding them.”

When we asked Katie for her thoughts about the effect of our partnership with Cooke she noted the pride and growth in students and alums after signing their SDMAs, or even participating the afterschool workshop series where we developed our decision-making curriculum (Good News [7/23/2021]). She says that “[t]hrough the SDM process, they learn that their opinions are valued, that asking for help is something everyone needs and that they have many people in their lives who want to help them.”

Katie has not only helped us unstintingly in our work with Cooke, she has also become a dear friend. When she took maternity leave, we waited anxiously and were thrilled at the birth of her beautiful son, John, who is now a strapping 4-year old! We have cheered her promotions over these 6 years, and now look forward to learning what the “next chapter” will bring for her and her family.



GOOD LUCK, KATIE, AND THANKS FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE TO PROMOTE EVERYONE'S RIGHT TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS, REGARDLESS OF DISABILITY!