

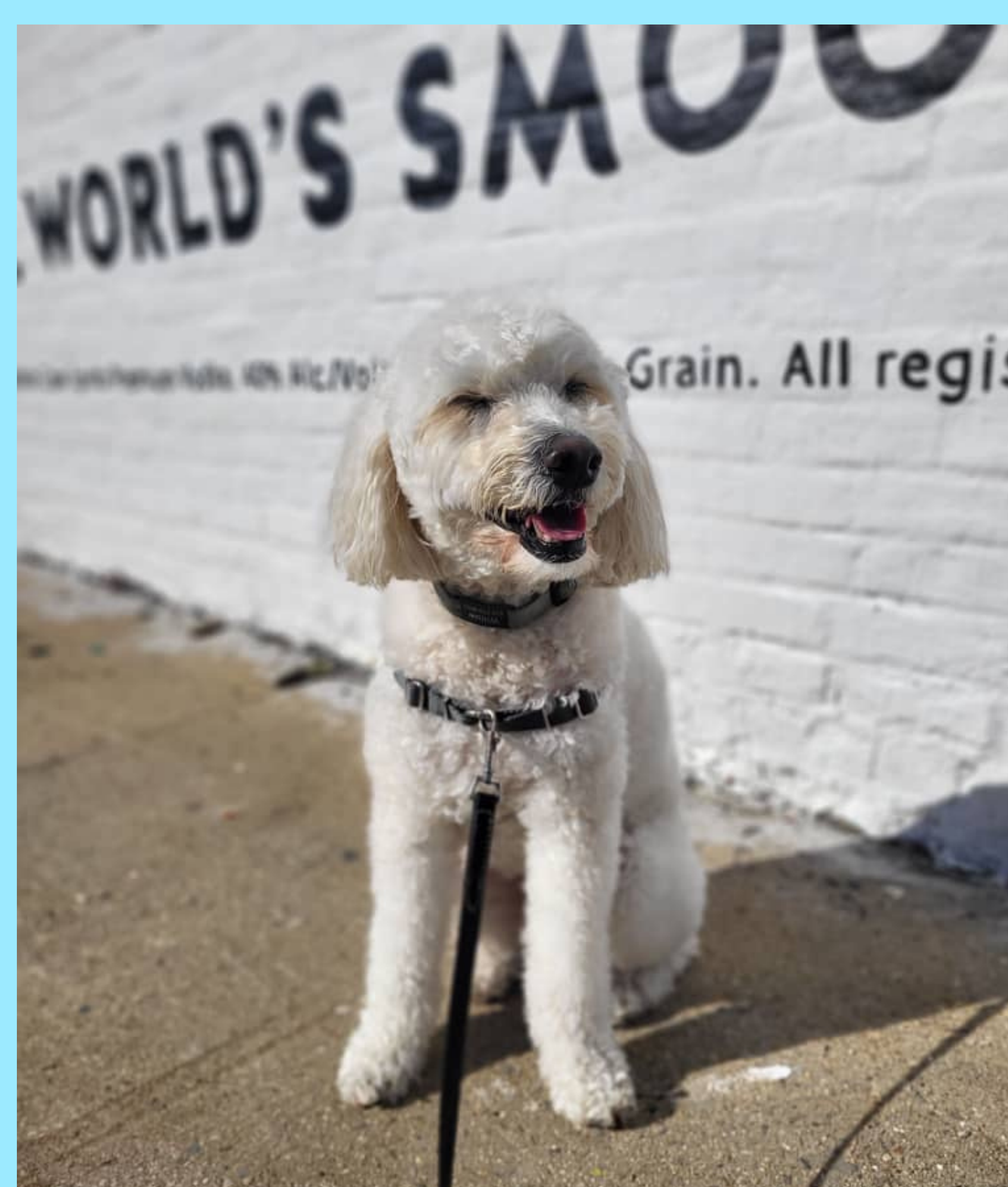
## GOOD NEWS x 2: A NEW POSITION AND AN ENGAGEMENT

You may be familiar with Jenna, who joined SDMNY as one of our first paid Mentors last September (GN [9/9/2022]). We'd known her for some time, both as a volunteer facilitator, and as Interim Director of CUNY Disability Services, so we were thrilled when she agreed to be a part of our OPWDD implementation grant. She had just left CUNY to enroll in the LEND program at SUNY Stony Brook, where, over the course of the year she developed "much more of a systems perspective and understanding of the value of interdisciplinary work, as well as deeper connections in healthcare fields [that would enable her] to spread the word about SDM as an alternative to guardianship." Initially Jenna was only able to commit to half time, which worked well then, but she has become invaluable, in part because of her wealth of knowledge and experience, especially around education and training. And now she's graduated, and we couldn't be more excited, because she's agreed to go full time as our new (and first) Technical Assistance Coordinator & Transition Specialist.



Of her first year as a Mentor, Jenna says:

*The exciting part of this role is getting the opportunity to help build the capacity for many more people across the state to have access to create a Supported Decision-Making Agreement. I love talking through roadblocks with the team and coming up with creative ways we can keep improving our model. However, it's hard to compare that to the powerful moment when you see a Decision-Maker start to see themselves as someone with autonomy over their own choices, sometimes for the first time in their life!*



*Willow the Goldendoodle*

Jenna is already using her CUNY experience in developing and managing programs in inclusive education for students with I/DD. Because inclusive education is all about self-determination, she sees a natural fit with SDM and has developed a partnership with CUNY Unlimited and AHRC's Melissa Riggio Higher Education Program that will pilot our decision-making curriculum at Hostos Community College this fall. We can't wait to see how it goes!



But, as if all that weren't enough positive change for the year, last week Jenna and her partner of 4+ years, Will, got engaged. She says that, perhaps most excited about the news, was her beloved Willow, who has been with her for almost 9 years and is "happy that they're making it official."

Jenna tells us that although she and Will don't have additional plans yet, "I do know the SDMNY decision mapping chart is going to be hung up somewhere in the apartment when we start planning a wedding!"

As we always say, everyone uses supports in making their decisions, and what could be a happier example.

**CONGRATULATIONS JENNA, WILL AND WILLOW!**