

OUR FIRST SDMNY TWINS, A STEP TOWARD RESTORATION OF RIGHTS, AND A SURPRISING “SECRET” NEIGHBORHOOD IN NYC

We've had sibling Decision-Makers in the past, (Good News 1/15/2021) but this week marked the SDMA signing celebration for one of two twins, our very first SDMNY twin Decision-Makers. Teddy is 27, lives with his family, including 2 dogs, in Queens (more about that in a minute). Perhaps most important, he has an identical twin brother, Nick, although he is slightly taller than Nick, and more likely to play the role of “big brother.” When the boys turned 18, their mom Joanne was told by their schools to get guardianship, and she did, but always believed that they could and should be more independent. She had encouraged independence and continued learning by exposing them to travel, which both love. Through their programs at AHRC, they have gone on weekend trips to upstate NY and Connecticut, but also on 6 cruises! Joanne felt strongly that they did not need a guardian, so when she learned about SDMNY through a Community Support Network Zoom meeting offered by the Westchester Institute for Human Development (WIHD), she contacted us and soon after both Teddy and Nick signed up for SDMNY facilitation.



Teddy and Nick at Ezra film preview in Manhattan



Teddy and Nick on one of their cruises

Teddy was the first to have a facilitator assigned, and on Tuesday he and his family celebrated signing his SDMA with a delicious cake that, of course, Teddy chose (Joanne said, “Of course. It was his decision!”) Teddy remarked on how he enjoyed the process of learning about SDM, that the facilitation “went smoothly” and “wasn’t hard.” Joanne said “Teddy is a good person. He always tries his best when learning new things. I love supporting him to be more independent.”

Nick, who has been assigned a facilitator more recently is now also on his way to an SDMA and, no surprise, intends to choose Teddy as one of his supporters! Both of the twins have also begun meeting with our partner Disability Rights New York (DRNY) towards filing petitions to end their guardianships and have all of their civil and legal rights restored. As a well-known cable TV commentator says, “Stay tuned. Watch this space.”



A canal in Ramblersville



Swans in the canal next to their house

There's also another wonderful piece to this story. While we hope that Decision-Makers and their families learn from us, we also learn from them; sometimes about things unrelated to the facilitation but of real interest, in this case, about the basically unknown neighborhood in NYC where they live, surrounded by water and wildlife, in the smallest village in the city, once known as “the Venice of NYC.” It's in Queens, but not the Queens most of us know or think of, and it's called Ramblersville, bordered by Jamaica Bay and Broad Channel (for more information, [click here](#)). It's not always idyllic, and certainly not during hurricanes, including especially Sandy, where they have been flooded 8 times. But mostly, Ramblersville is a unique treasure, just like Teddy and Nick and all our other Decision-Makers who demonstrate that people with I/DD not only have the right, but the ability to make their own decisions with the support of trusted people in their lives.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO TEDDY, JOANNE, AND FACILITATOR CAROL, AND
LOOKING FORWARD TO CELEBRATING WITH NICK!**