

A BITTERSWEET FAREWELL



Jenna

It's always sad when a member of our SDMNY team departs, but this is especially true for Mentor and Transition Specialist Jenna, who has been part of our community for longer than anyone except Founding Director Kris Glen and Associate Director Joan Cornachio. We first met Jenna about 6 years ago when she was the Disability Programs Coordinator at CUNY; she had heard about this "exciting new practice," SDM, and signed up to be trained as a volunteer facilitator. Like everything else she does, Jenna was amazing. Her first Decision-Maker, Dylan, remembers that

"Not only was she a very kind-hearted person, but she did a fabulous job of helping me to understand further all my decision making."

When our initial DDPC grant ended, and OPWDD funded us to design and pilot a statewide facilitation service delivery system, we were thrilled that she agreed to join us as a part-time mentor, even as she began graduate work and participation in the highly regarded Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program at SUNY Stony Brook. After successfully completing the LEND program, we were even more thrilled to have her full time, taking on many more responsibilities that her new title could describe.

Jenna is a born and gifted teacher, and took on substantial responsibility for training new facilitators, but also, true to her roots and supporting students, developed and taught a pioneering decision-making curriculum to "Think College" students at Hostos Community College. (Good News 10/13/2023) where she generously and creatively used plans for her upcoming wedding and honeymoon to involve students in a real-life scenario of decision-making.

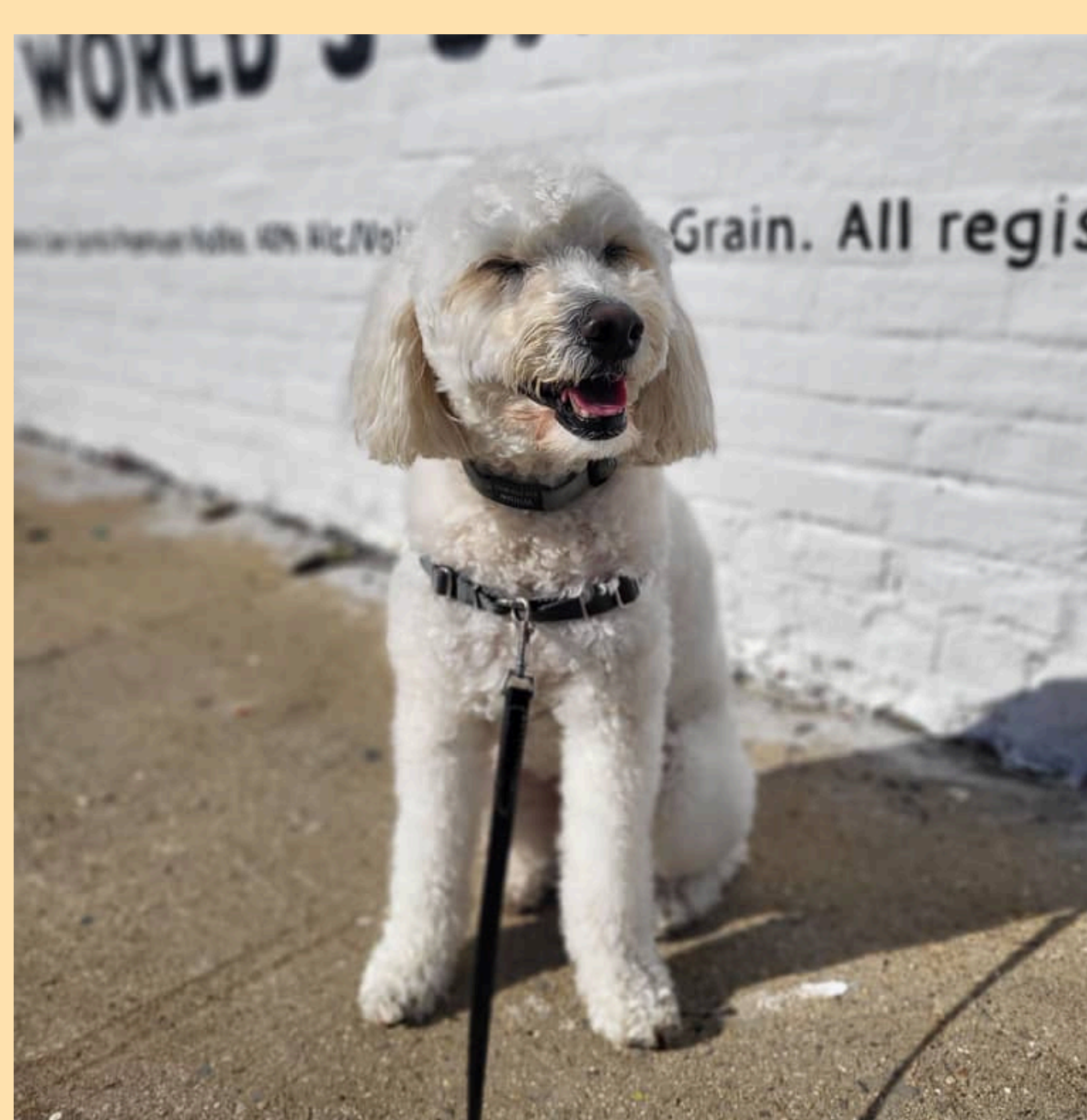


Hostos Community College class

As the most experienced of our Facilitator/Mentors, she has been an important contributor to the new ways in which we envision the Mentor role, and a source of both experiential and conceptual knowledge for her fellow Mentors. Here's just a little of what two of them have to say about Jenna:

"Jenna was my first mentor for my very first facilitation. Although I was nervous, Jenna provided a calming presence, reassurance, and an obvious wealth of knowledge. Jenna provided me with a safe space to work through all kinds of problems with multiple Decision-Makers. [and] I often sought out her perspective on many of my cases. Wherever Jenna goes, she will bring her passion for human rights, friendliness, and willingness to take initiative." Mentor Fateema

"Jenna has left a strong imprint on so much of SDMNY's work that even with her gone, her contributions are going to continue to help us all at SDMNY -she has created tools, decision-making curriculum, facilitation protocols, just to name a few. SDMNY is losing a true disability rights/justice advocate!" Mentor Karen



Willow

Jenna's warmth, knowledge, expertise, collegiality and passion for human rights will be deeply missed, (as, we confess, will her wonderful dog, Willow, who brightened many meetings for us all.) We know that whatever her next endeavor she will continue to promote and advance the right of everyone to make their own decisions, regardless of disability. So we don't want to say goodbye, which seems so final, but instead,

CIAO JENNA, AND GREAT SUCCESS IN WHATEVER COMES NEXT!