

# A TRIP TO CATALONIA AND A REAFFIRMATION OF OUR VALUES



Santa Maria de Montserrat

We have always been clear that our work is premised on the international human right of legal capacity, and that we have been nourished and enriched by the work of human rights advocates around the world. We've also been proud to make contributions to that community (Good News 3/22/24; 2/14/25). Last week, SDMNY Director Naomi Brickel attended an invitational international human rights conference hosted by the Support-Girona Foundation in Catalonia, Spain from which we both learned, and to which we contributed. The conference, titled "Vides Dignes: Una Qüestió de Drets Humans" ("Dignified Lives: A Human Rights Issue"), was part of the Monastery of Montserrat's Millennium celebration on March 13th and 14th, 2025. Here's Naomi's report:



SDMNY Director Naomi Brickel, speaking at the conference

The conference emphasized self-determination, inclusion, and the inherent dignity of individuals with disabilities, highlighting that living with dignity is a fundamental human right. It aimed to transform social and health services in Catalonia, Spain, and globally to align with human rights principles, particularly those outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The event fostered knowledge sharing, debate, and reflection on advancing human rights and inclusive community living.

I found the experience inspiring and enlightening. It was eye-opening to engage in international dialogue around SDM with countries that have ratified the CRPD, where legal capacity for people with disabilities is a given. Their discussions focus on Article 12 of the CRPD—Legal Capacity and support for decision-making—challenging the status quo and paternalistic practices. In the US, where guardianship remains prevalent, SDM conversations still involve debate. Considering SDMNY's recognition by the UN as a global model, I can't help but imagine how much further we'd be if we had ratified the CRPD.

But while I perceived international progress, I also saw the benefits of the SDMNY model's evolution. Support Girona has successfully transitioned from a guardianship to support model, incorporating CRPD principles into their work. That said, our SDMNY model ensures not only rights but understanding and enjoyment of those rights. I am excited for future impactful international collaborations and learning from each other.

We're excited to have been invited to this conference, to have had the opportunity to learn from others and to share our successes and challenges. Knowing Naomi, she also made SDMNY a lot of new friends. And, we hear, Catalonia was beautiful, the food was great, and it was Calçot season!



Naomi sampling Calçot, a Catalan specialty green onion

**THANKS, NAOMI, FOR REPRESENTING SDMNY, AND REAFFIRMING OUR COMMITMENT TO THE HUMAN RIGHT OF EVERYONE TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS, REGARDLESS OF DISABILITY!**