

A COURT REFERRAL AND A BIG, LOVING CLAN MAKE FOR A SPECIAL SDMA SIGNING CEREMONY

One of our most rewarding experiences is when a Surrogate in a guardianship proceeding sees the person for whom guardianship is sought, thinks that, with support, it shouldn't be necessary to take away that person's rights, and refers the family to SDMNY. Then, of course, it's even more rewarding when the person successfully completes SDMNY facilitation and signs their SDMA. That's what happened earlier this week on Staten Island when Jared, 24, celebrated his SDMA signing with the enthusiastic support of his large and loving family.



*Facilitator Michelle, Mentor Karen, Supporters Doug & Venessa
Jared & his Mom Annette, Grandma Eleanor, Dad Matthew
Uncle Jonathan, Uncle Russell*

Although he's an only child, Jared has a close-knit and involved group of relatives who make up his nine chosen supporters. Many are uncles, and as facilitator Michelle joked, as Jared chose his supporters, "Every time I thought I was done with uncles, another one popped up!" She also remarked on how committed they were to the process, with lots of input, and undivided attention, but also with banter and humor that often made their meetings "quite jovial and fun." In return, Jared and his family expressed their appreciation for Michelle, for "coordinating the process", "sticking with them" and "taking care of everybody."

The process was also— everyone agreed, and we can attest, – "hard work". Jared has many interests including reading, watching TV and movies, studying, playing games, cooking and baking, and going out, especially to his day hab program. But he is also, as his Uncle Russell noted, a "hard worker" in "a family of hard workers." Russell continued "Jared, I'm glad you made this decision to go through this process. You worked hard on this for a whole year!... Good job Jared!" Facilitator Michelle concurred, applauding Jared for always "being present in th[e] process."

There was also real relief and appreciation for the referral to SDMNY by the Surrogate's Court (You may recall that the Richmond County Surrogate pioneered the requirement that Petitioners for guardianship attend a session on alternatives to guardianship before they can actually file [Good News 2/5/21]). Jared's dad put it this way:

"I'm happy that Jared is not legally restricted from making decisions that he is able to make. I didn't feel it was right to take away his rights. And I think with all of our family as support, he will do great. He does usually take into account different opinions, and does his own reasoning, and then can make a decision from there. I'm glad we gave him the freedom to be able to do that and have our help along the way."



Richmond County Surrogate's Court, Staten Island

We're so happy that everything came together for Jared, and so grateful to the Richmond County Surrogate for seeing and promoting Jared's right to make his own decisions, with the support of trusted persons in his life, regardless of disability!

CONGRATULATIONS TO JARED AND HIS SUPPORTERS, AND THANKS TO FACILITATOR MICHELLE AND THE RICHMOND COUNTY SURROGATE'S COURT!