

EXTRA GOOD NEWS FROM THIS STATEN ISLAND SDMA SIGNING

SDMA signings almost always call for a celebration with the Decision-Maker, their family and/or supporters, and the SDMNY facilitator. For Decision-Maker Wesley, however, this last month has been one of **four** celebrations, including *two* SDMA signings! Pretty special for a 19-year-old who is great with computers, builds amazing models with Legos, and is described as “quiet, though very smart,” and as being “funny, with a dry sense of humor!”

The story begins in the spring of 2024, when Wesley turned 18. His mom, Maveric, was told by his school that she needed to get guardianship, so she dutifully went to Surrogate’s Court in Richmond County (Staten Island) to start the process. When the Surrogate met and talked with Wesley, he saw that this was a person who might not necessarily need guardianship if he had support in making decisions. Accordingly, he appointed Maveric as temporary guardian, referred her to SDMNY, and scheduled a subsequent appearance for a year later, May 8, 2025. Maveric promptly contacted us, and after a conversation with Wesley, he signed on and began facilitation. Unfortunately, after a number of meetings, the facilitator had to withdraw, and there was a delay until a new facilitator, Marie, was assigned in January of this year.

Wesley and his mom were concerned about the deadline of the upcoming hearing and having to start from scratch, but they collaborated with Marie, an already experienced and successful facilitator, using notes from earlier meetings and setting up a rigorous weekly facilitation schedule, including homework! Wesley worked hard, and Marie confesses that his computer skills were often helpful to her as they worked on the Big Four Chart, which formed the basis for his SDMA. Wesley and his supporters, Maveric and Dan (soon to be his stepfather), completed that SDMA, which was signed in the first celebration on April 23.



Wesley and his mom Maveric



Maveric and Dan's wedding party

But more celebrations soon followed. Maveric and Dan had been planning a wedding but held off so Wesley could have his special day; they shared their vows with family and friends—and a very proud Wesley—two days later. Then, on May 8, came the return to Court, where Wesley was able to present his SDMA, convincing the Surrogate to terminate his guardianship and restore all of his legal and civil rights. Another cause for celebration! Finally, because Wesley had been under guardianship when he signed the SDMA, in order to make certain that it was legally valid, last week he celebrated his second signing, this time with the full legal capacity he had earned through his efforts and those of his supporters and facilitator Marie (who, btw, is also celebrating her retirement after 40 years as Director of Day Programs at People’s Arc of Suffolk!). And there is still one more celebration soon to come, as Wesley graduates from high school this June.

Wesley’s story makes us happy in so many ways. We are proud to have been part of it, facilitating his ability to make his own decisions with the support of his trusted, loving parents and ensuring his right to self-determination as he enters the next chapter of what we hope will be a very happy and inclusive life!



Facilitator Marie

CONGRATULATIONS WESLEY, CONGRATULATIONS MAVERIC AND DAN, AND THANKS TO FACILITAOR MARIE!