

# AN SDMA SIGNING CEREMONY WHERE THE LYRICS WERE ALL ABOUT LOVE

As we so often note, all SDMA signings are celebrations, but each is unique in its own way because of the special qualities of the Decision-Maker and their supporters, and, for lack of a better word, the "vibe". For Decision-Maker Faith, who signed her agreement yesterday, the vibe was LOVE. (and what a treat it was to be there, even though remotely, to share in the experience!)

Faith is 22 and lives in Buffalo with her mom and dad, Michelle and Marc, and much-loved dog Paisley. She has long been involved with GiGi's Playhouse, an organization in the city providing programming and opportunities for people with Down's syndrome. Beginning as a volunteer, her advocacy and work ethic shone so brightly that she is now a proud employee, working at the front desk, taking people on tours, and performing clerical and other duties. And although she's very much a romantic, she's also tough, doing martial arts and earning a red stripe on her black belt.



*Faith with Paisley*

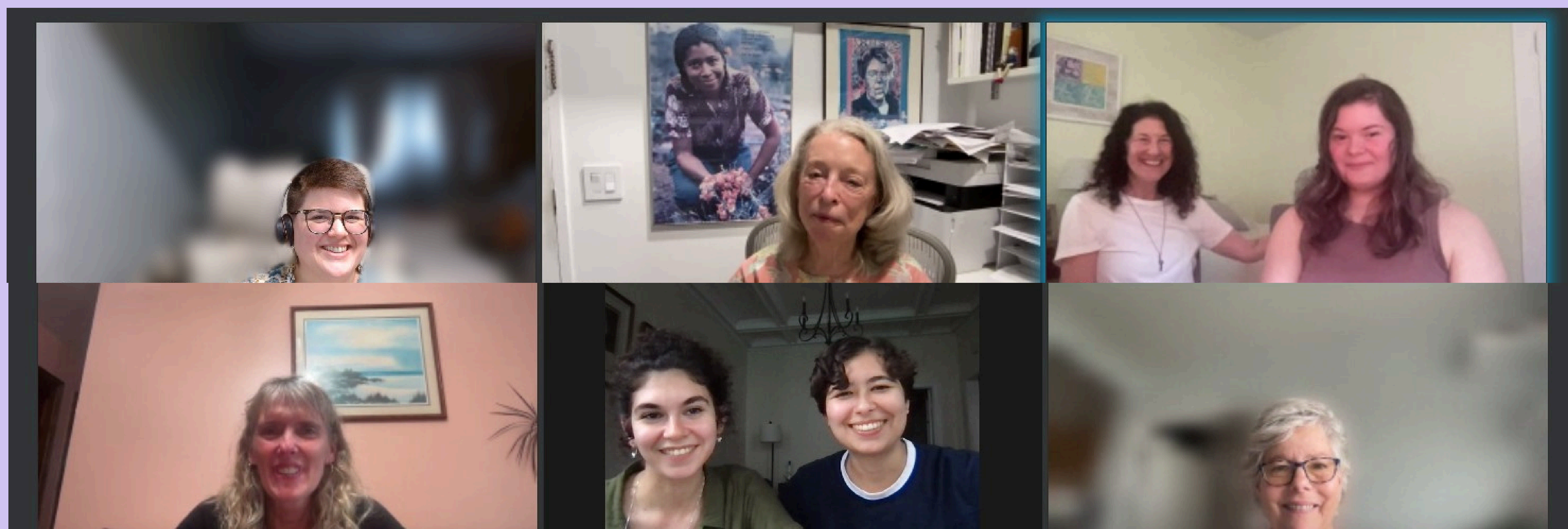


*Faith playing guitar*

More relevant to the "vibe" of her SDMA signing is her lifelong love of music. Faith is a talented musician who plays guitar, sings and writes songs in the genre she calls "romantic pop" ([Click here for the lyrics to the first song she ever wrote, appropriately titled "Leave your heart open."](#)) Facilitator Marian remembers the first time she met Faith and asked "What is most important to you?" Faith didn't have to think hard before answering "love" and went on in the conversation that followed to talk about all the different kinds of love that make our lives worthwhile.



Love of family (and how that love is returned) was evident in Faith's supporters, her mom and dad, her aunt Mary Frances and sister Emma, all of whom expressed how honored they are to have been chosen, and how proud they are of Faith and all her hard work. But love also makes it possible to create a "chosen" family, which Faith has done, including her "second mother" Emily, and Emma's partner Maya, who Faith calls her "chosen sister."



*Marian, SDMNY's Kris Glen, Michelle and Faith  
Mary, Emma and Maya, SDMNY's Joan Cornachio*

At the signing we were delighted -and felt very affirmed- to hear the assessment from Mary Frances, a school psychologist, that the SDMNY facilitation process was "amazing" and "fantastic." Mom Michelle was also appreciative, saying "We were so excited to learn about SDM, as it's a perfect fit for us. We're all very proud of Faith and excited about her future... I can't say enough good things about Marian- what a gem!" But central to the event was Faith's lovely and loving presence, and the positive impact she has in the world. Perhaps the best example was in the comments sent by Emily, who wasn't able to be present, but who knows Faith through Gigi's Playhouse. She wrote:

"It is so inspiring for me to be a supporter of Faith's. As a mom she gives me hope and peace about the future and the possibilities for my son. And as a professional, she drives me to keep working hard and making [Western New York] a better place for individuals like Faith. It is truly inspiring to see all the challenges Faith faces and overcomes. To say I am proud would be an understatement."

We join the spirit of Faith's lyrics, to "leave your heart open," to which we add, "to everyone, regardless of disability, and their right to autonomy, self-determination, inclusion and dignity."

**CONGRATULATIONS TO FAITH AND HER SUPPORTERS, AND  
THANKS TO FACILITATOR MARIAN!**