



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Hosts Disability Pride Month Recognition Ceremony

PETE HARCKHAM July 27, 2021

| ISSUE: **DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH, RIGHTS FOR THE DISABLED, AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**



Peekskill, NY – New York State Senator Pete Harckham commemorated Disability Pride Month this week by hosting a special recognition ceremony online and honoring two residents from Senate District 40, Lucille Rossi and Brian Ackerman, as well as CAREERS Support Solutions, a not-for-profit organization.

“This event is an opportunity to honor our neighbors with differing abilities, and also to honor those who have dedicated their lives to empowering them,” said Harckham. “And although Disability Pride is not yet a nationally recognized holiday or celebration, our hope is that by holding events like this we can help raise awareness and gain universal recognition for the disabled.”

Harckham noted that the Disability Pride recognition ceremony was being held on the 31st anniversary of the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the landmark civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination based on differing abilities.

Senate Commendation Awards were presented by Harckham to Rossi and Ackerman, while CAREERS Support Solutions Executive Director Christina “Tina” Cornish-Lauria accepted an Empire Award from the senator during a virtual ceremony aired live on Facebook; to see a video of the event, click [here](#).

Lucille Rossi, a grassroots activist and parent of a 21-year-old with an intellectual disability, serves on the Westchester County Disability Advisory Committee and the Town of New Castle’s Every Person is Connected (EPIC) Committee. Last year she was awarded the Chappaqua Central School District PTA’s “Advocate in Action” award for her work with special education students and their families.

“In my view, now, more than ever, we need to focus on inclusion and access—society must embrace our children as full members of the American family, with rights and access to employment, housing and the support services they need,” said Rossi, who has also worked closely with the Westchester Institute for Human Development and the New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation’s Housing Resource Center. “Thank you, Senator Harckham, for shining a light on families like ours with disabilities.”

Ackerman has served as the Programming Director at the Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville since its founding in 2001. He organized the REELabilities Film Festival this year, which is the country’s largest festival dedicated to films about individuals with disabilities. Currently, Ackerman is working to expand access for patrons with disabilities as part of the Film Center’s planned renovations; he is also instituting a program to make films available through the hearing loop system to increase access to films for individuals with hearing aids.

“Anybody who has lived with a disability for any portion of their life realizes that there is a place in which the culture actually puts them, or wants to put them,” said Ackerman, who admitted that he’d never been recognized before because of being very hard of hearing. “What’s important about the work you do, Senator Harckham, and what everyone else here is doing, centers on moving people out of that room of stigmatization and marginalization, and into a broad sweep where everyone else is.”

Founded in 1987, CAREERS Support Solutions is a non-profit organization that helps individuals with disabilities in Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess counties attain sustained employment at no cost to them, their families or employers. The organization’s programs work to meet an individual’s unique needs and place them in jobs based upon each person’s abilities and interests. It also provides on-the-job training and long-term support for as long as each individual requires.

“At CAREERS, we are always proud of our hardworking, enthusiastic, determined, loyal, respectful and dedicated clients who inspire us to do our best, and it is our mission to help them be their best every day,” said Cornish-Lauria. “Our goal at CAREERS is not only to help those with disabilities find and keep jobs they love, but to educate employers and the public about the benefits of hiring individuals.”