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***Creating Job Opportunities in New York State
for People with Developmental Disabilities***

*NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities Recognizes Businesses and
Employees at 9th “Works for Me” Awards Ceremony*

Albany - Building on the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities’ (OPWDD) mission to help people live richer lives in the community, six businesses were honored today at the New York State Museum’s Huxley Theater in Albany as recipients of OPWDD’s *Works for Me* awards.

Works for Me awards are given to businesses across the state that are committed to workforce diversity and to hiring individuals with developmental disabilities. These businesses recognize the significant contributions that individuals can make in the workplace and that hiring workers with developmental disabilities makes good business sense.

OPWDD Acting Commissioner Kerry A. Delaney said, “The businesses being honored today share OPWDD’s commitment to promoting a diversified and robust workforce that includes individuals with developmental disabilities. By valuing the skills and talents people of all abilities offer, these businesses are making our communities stronger and helping the people we support every day reach their full potential.”

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed an Executive Order in 2014 establishing the Employment First Commission, which was tasked with creating an Employment First policy for New York, and making competitive, integrated employment the first option when considering supports and services for people with disabilities. The Employment First Commission delivered their recommendations in 2015 based on feedback from more than 30 advocacy, trade, and provider organizations, as well as individuals with disabilities. Most recently, the Employment First Commission partnered with OPWDD to launch [EmployAbility](#), a toolkit to help business owners and operators understand the benefits they could achieve by hiring employees of all abilities.

In addition to other resources, New York offers the [Workers with Disabilities Employment Tax Credit](#) which provides a tax credit to businesses that hire individuals with a disability. There is no limit on the number of hires one company can make, and the employer ultimately decides who to hire.

More than 8,000 individuals with developmental disabilities are currently engaged in competitive employment in New York State, making at least minimum wage. OPWDD has implemented [strategies](#) to increase that number.

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The 2017 Works For Me Honorees are:

Small Business of the Year: [True Farms Inc, Perry, NY](#)

True Farms has been an integral part of New York's Finger Lakes region for nearly 40 years. This family-owned dairy farm has not only employed people with developmental disabilities, but has been an ambassador for integrated employment, promoting it to other businesses as well. One of the farm's employees is Charlie Schmidt, who has been taking care of the 1100 cows there and keeping the farm clean for the past three years.

Medium Business of the Year: [Island Trees Public Library, Levittown, NY](#)

Island Trees Public Library is a rich community resource providing a wealth of services to the Levittown area of Long Island. Nicole Perlongo has been working nearly a decade at the library, with her duties growing as every year passes. She is responsible for sorting and returning magazines and DVD's to the library shelves, and for making the library a better place to work and visit.

Large Business of the Year: [Conduent, Endicott, NY](#)

Conduent of Endicott believes that providing job accommodations for individuals with disabilities is a priority for the overall success of the business. David Walling has been working in Conduent's integrated workforce for three years as a transaction processor handling data entry work. While only working part-time, David consistently outperforms many of the full-time employees.

Corporate Partner of the Year: [Flory's Corporation, Hopewell Junction, NY](#)

Flory's is a name known in New York's Hudson Valley for operating all-in-one gas stations, convenience stores and deli's, and for being a champion for integrated employment opportunities. The Flory family sought out a supported employment agency looking to provide jobs for people of all abilities. As a result, the company has several people with developmental disabilities on its payroll. One of them, is Robin Stokosa, the cheery face customers have been greeted by at Flory's Hopewell Junction store for the past four years.

Government/Nonprofit of the Year: [Boys & Girls Clubs of Buffalo, Buffalo, NY](#)

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Buffalo serves more than 3,900 youth between the ages of 5-18 and understands the benefits of employing people with developmental disabilities. Anthony Stevens' official title for nearly four years has been Youth Development Professional, but he does far more, including coaching basketball, hosting podcasts, and, most importantly, supporting the needs of the kids in his charge.

Youth Transition Program of the Year: [Cooke School & Institute, New York, NY](#)

Cooke School & Institute in New York City's Chelsea section is driven by the belief that all children deserve an education that leads to an independent future where they can be an integral part of their community. The school's Skills program for 18-21-year-olds does just that, giving students real-world work experience.

About the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

The New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities is responsible for coordinating services for more than 130,000 New Yorkers with developmental disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders and other disabilities. It provides services directly and through a network of approximately 700 nonprofit provider agencies, with about 80 percent of services provided by those nonprofits and 20 percent provided by state-run operations. More than 40,000 individuals with developmental disabilities are currently receiving residential supports from OPWDD and its network of providers.

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