

NYADD-VOCCATE

New York Alliance for Developmental Disabilities OCTOBER 2022

One Is Too Many

It happened at 4:50 a.m. on Friday, September 25th, four miles north of Red Hook, in Dutchess County, NY. Cheerful, articulate, 14-year-old Romelo Cruze was struck and killed by a motorist. Romelo was walking down 9W, alone, in the dark.

Weeks later, an unnamed 48-year old man walked out of his group home and into Lake Erie. Just like Romelo, no one saw him leave. His body was found the next day, in the lake, hours after staff reported him missing.

Families whose loved ones have intellectual and developmental disabilities fear their child may be next. They question:

- Were cameras being used?
- Did staff fall asleep, working a double shift?
- What practical steps will OPWDD take, to prevent future tragedies?



Surveillance cameras are common in everyday settings. Why not In/around NYS group homes?

ISSUES

NYADD continues to advocate for services for our loved ones with IDD, speaking to OPWDD, Justice Center, providers, and agencies. Upcoming: meet with DOH to support family caregivers, and OPWDD to address an eviction clause on leases. — this doesn't comply with OPWDD/HCBS regs./requirements.

Our adult children's Direct Service Professionals, DSPs, desperately need a substantial wage increase, to attract quality workers. Day Programs in many areas have not been restored. Underpaid staff continue to leave for better-paying jobs. As we all know, no staff = no programs. More than 130 NYS group homes have closed in the past 2 years, while the need increases.



Homesteads for Hope Meets With Temple Grandin

Homesteads For Hope, an inclusive farm community for individuals with IDD held *An Evening With Temple Grandin* on Sept. 28th at their 55-acre Rochester farm on the Erie Canal.

Psychologist, development coordinator and NYADD lead Heather Ash Burroughs invited the well-known autism expert to speak to their community after Temple toured the facility earlier this spring. The result was a dynamic talk that inspired many, including a question and answer segment delivered virtually in Temple Grandin's practical, down-to-earth style. You can enjoy her full Q&A in January 2023 on *Homesteads For Hope's* new podcast. Part of her Q&A is available now on the [NYADD Facebook page](#), under Files.

Temple Grandin has written bestselling books, inspired a movie and travels the world sharing her wisdom.

Legislation

People With Disabilities (PWD) NY Assembly Chairman Tom Abinanti held a hearing in Albany on October 12th. NYADD was well represented, along with other NYS advocates/agencies.

Since Asm. Abinanti lost his re-election bid, NY Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie will appoint a new PWD chair sometime next year. Tom's camera bill will have to be rewritten and re-presented to the Assembly, so this sets us back many months. NYADD will explore the possibility of writing several camera bills proposing outdoor cameras, door alarms to catch elopers, and a pilot program in selected group homes. We'll seek co-sponsors in both Assembly and Senate.

Good news: Senator Mannion's Preferred Source bill was signed this month, to increase employment for people with IDD.

When NYADD focuses on a few key issues — pushing for cameras in and around group homes, insisting on a decent wage for DSPs — we are heard. We can't stop speaking out for those we love. Far too many are sitting around, waiting for services, waiting for Day Program to reopen, some still waiting for a placement. Ask your legislator: what are you waiting for?



NYADD leads at Sept 12th hearing in Albany:
Katy Faivre, Barbara Todd, Rabbi Simcha Weinstein