



# DEI – Agency Best Practices

**Melissa Roth**, Chief Human Resource Officer, Aspire of WNY

**Rhonda Howard**, Director of Human Resources, The Resource Center

**Emerson Pickert**, Human Resources Administrator, The Resource Center



## Melissa Roth, SHRM-SCP

Chief Human Resource  
Officer, Aspire of WNY

Melissa Roth (she/her), with more than 27 years of experience in Human Resources/Training, has been with Aspire of WNY since January 2006. Her promotion to Vice-President of Human Resources came after successfully serving as Director of Human Resources for six years. Ms. Roth earned a Liberal Arts & Science Degree from Monroe Community College in Rochester NY and a Bachelor Degree in Social Work from Buffalo State College. She is a Leadership Liaison to Aspire's Quality Partnership on Diversity and Inclusion; leading the Agency-wide Implicit Basis Workshop Initiative and is an active member of the DDAWNY HR Committee.





**Rhonda L.  
Howard,**  
**SHRM-CP, PHR**  
Director of Human Resources,  
The Resource Center

Rhonda (she/her) is the Director of Human Resources for the Chautauqua County Chapter of NYSARC, (The Resource Center), joining the team in 2019. She resides in Jamestown with her husband, Brad; daughter, Reagan; and their two Labrador Retrievers, Minden and Maestro.

Rhonda has been a practicing human resources professional for more than thirty years, specializing in for-profit and not-for-profit organizations in the health and human services, heavy duty, capital equipment manufacturing, and staffing solutions industries. Rhonda's expertise is in talent acquisition, labor and employee relations, compensation and benefits, organizational development, HR compliance, and implementing strategic HR initiatives.



# Emerson Pickert, SHRM-CP

Human Resources  
Administrator,  
The Resource Center

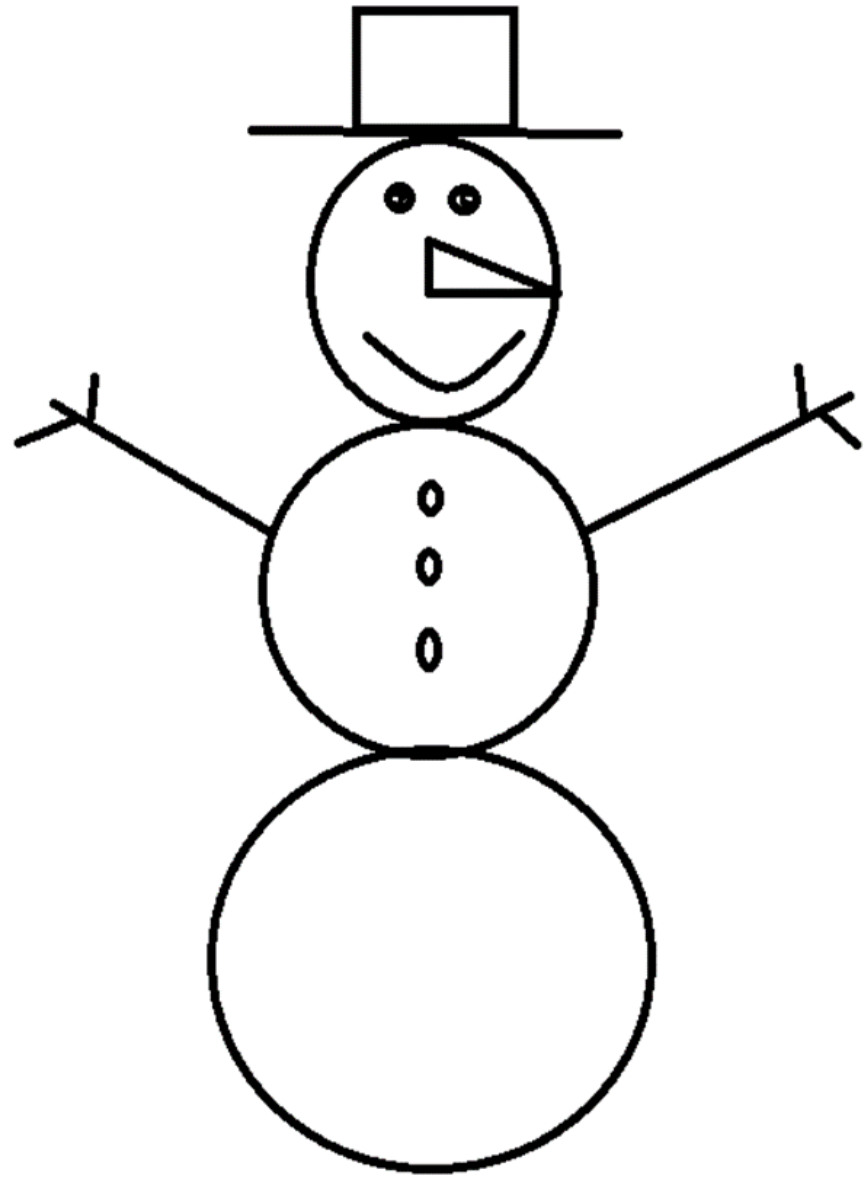
Emerson (he/him/they/them), began his career in human services over ten (10) years ago. They have a Master of Arts, specializing in Leadership, and are SHRM-CP certified. They began their career serving as a staff member for the local University's Enrollment/Recruiting department. Their passion for "service with excellence" only further developed during their years spent providing care to families of the community through the local funeral home.

Currently, Emerson is employed with the Chautauqua County Chapter of NYSARC, known as The Resource Center, in Jamestown, NY, as a Human Resources Administrator. During their 5+ years with The Resource Center, Emerson has served in the capacities of Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement, Compliance, and, most recently, Personnel and Employee Relations. He strives to see each employee supported and encouraged to perform their best work while being their most authentic self.



# Activity

Using the materials at your tables, follow the directions given.





# Discussing DEI

Melissa Roth, Rhonda Howard, Emerson Pickert



# Why did your Agency choose to focus on DEI?



# How does your Agency define DEI?

# Our Purpose Statement:

QPDI's purpose is to nurture and sustain an inclusive culture, where we value and recognize our differences and allow them to drive initiatives and solutions to better support people receiving services and our workforce at Aspire of WNY.

# DEI Policy Commitment

- **Foster, cultivate and preserve a culture** of diversity, equity and inclusion.
- It is the cornerstone of our **Statement of Beliefs and Code of Conduct**.
- TRC employees are the **most valuable asset** we have.
- The **collective sum** of the *individual differences, life experiences, knowledge, inventiveness, innovation, self-expression, unique capabilities and talent* that employees invest in their work represents a significant part of not only our culture, but our values, organizational character and Agency's achievement as well.

# DEI Statement

The Resource Center is committed to ensure everyone feels welcomed and included. We celebrate the diversely unique, seen and unseen, strengths of all people. We equitably embrace everyone, in all aspects of life, to impact and contribute to our community.

**What steps did your Agency take to introduce DEI to the Agency and the Workforce?**



Supporting individuals with Disabilities and their families since 1959

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February 26, 2024

On behalf of The Resource Center and its Board of Directors, I am pleased to share with you the release of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Statement and Policy.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) form the foundation of our beliefs we have held true which are echoed in The Resource Center Statement of Beliefs, Code of Conduct and Statement of Employee Rights and Responsibilities. The DEI Statement and Policy seek to express our enduring commitment to celebrating the collective sum or our individual differences, life experiences, knowledge, inventiveness, innovation, self-expression, unique capabilities and talents as we show our organizational character.

As this critical initiative moves forward, we have taken many actions in support of DEI. We have begun translating HR policies and procedures into Spanish and making those accessible on the Intranet; adding more diverse holiday offerings to The Resource Center benefit package; supporting the LGBTQ+ community with a focus on PRIDE month and the movement to more inclusive language; ensuring access to bilingual language content using Google Translate for access to platforms like Ceridian Dayforce; offering training content in Spanish via Releas; creating a pilot mentorship program for employee growth and development; and serving on the Chautauqua County Coalition to promote Racial and Social Justice through Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) program.

You may be asking yourself why this is important or how is this really different. To that, I would like to share some important thoughts. When we truly embrace and celebrate each person's uniqueness we create and become more welcoming and more inclusive in our homes, work groups, teams, departments and functions across the Agency. That welcoming and inclusive work environment allows each of us to feel the power of belonging where every individual is seen and has a voice. All of these attributes create an environment where we feel empowered and engaged to make The Resource Center the best place to work and serve the Mission, each and every day. And, the journey starts with each one of us and letting our authenticity shine in our work, illuminating the values of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Over the next year, you will hear more about our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives. You will be asked to learn, participate and to embrace what is new, as well as what is already familiar because we do it every day. Please take a moment to review Personnel Policy 1.5, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement.

Our commitment to DEI runs deep. It is who we are. It is our organizational character. It is the demonstration of how we celebrate and equitably embrace everyone, in all aspects of life, to impact and contribute to our community and The Resource Center. We welcome your voice and your ideas as we strive for The Resource Center to truly be the best place you have ever worked.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, your Executive Support Team (EST) liaison, your Executive Management Team (EMT) member, or your manager, or contact the HR Help Desk at 716.661.4711.

Handwritten signatures of Kelly Dimitri and Joan Powner

The Resource Center is a chapter of NYSARC, Inc., and a member of The Arc, ACCSES, ANCOR, NYSACRA, NYSID, NYSIPA, and SourceAmerica.



The data below is a culmination of the results of that first survey:

- 149 out of approximately 1500 employees took the survey
- 35% of employees taking the survey were Direct Support Professionals.
- 73% feel hesitation to discuss difficult topics with their co-workers.
- 68% feel that staff and individuals should be involved in policy review and decision making.
- 66% feel that there should be a process to ensure that job postings are advertised on diverse media.
- Over 50% feel that Aspire currently does not have goals for meeting diversity and inclusion standards. Example being: “Include training on diversity and inclusion in orientation so that every employee feels included and has awareness about what it is all about.”
- Based on current situations, Aspire identified the need to create a Quality Partnership on Diversity and Inclusion. “The goal to maintain diversity and inclusion and equity is an ongoing commitment.”
- Challenges that prevent diversity and inclusion in the workplace are a “lack of understanding and education on the importance of these principles throughout the agency.”

Given this feedback, QPDI was able to narrow their focus to the following areas:

- Hesitancy to discuss difficult topics/finding ways to engage people in diversity, inclusion and equity discussion and/or initiatives
- Agency-wide Implicit Bias Workshops
- Defining and exploring what is known as Equity

To address these areas, QPDI championed Implicit Bias Workshops for the organization. The curriculum was developed with the support of an outside consulting firm. Throughout the development of the curriculum, we were able to tackle all three areas listed above. Workshops began 9/1/23 and is an ongoing effort that will include progressive workshops to dive deeper into Implicit Bias.



**What are some initiatives  
that have been rolled-  
out?**

# Black History Month



Work where you can make an **IMPACT**

## QPDI Presents: Celebrating Black Excellence in Western New York

Aspire of WNY's Quality Partnership on Diversity and Inclusion (QPDI) would like to take a moment to recognize a few leaders in WNY who are making, or have made, history. Please enjoy.

### Trevell Williams



Trevell Williams is the UCPEU President and longtime employee at Aspire of WNY. He started working for Aspire in 1991 when it was UCPA. He started as a relief staff in Residential, as he was a full-time student at the University at Buffalo. Shortly after, he moved into a part time position while continuing his education. Trevell began his career at Aspire working at the Audubon IRA, which was the Audubon Children's home at the time. Trevell then moved with some of the gentlemen living at the Audubon Children's home to the Wehrle IRA when it opened. Due to scheduling issues, Trevell transferred to the Falmouth IRA. Trevell graduated in 1994 and moved to New York City for four years. When his mother fell ill, Trevell moved back to Buffalo to help care for her. When he came back to Buffalo, he returned to the Wehrle IRA full-time. In 1999, Trevell became a building union representative. Later that year, he was asked to become a Vice President. In 2008, Trevell won the election to become union President. He was the first black president of Aspire's

union. Further, is one of only two black union presidents in Erie County under NYSUT. Trevell has always wanted to have his own company. Currently, he runs two successful online businesses. One is a distribution company that fulfills designs for the public; customers range from individual to large size organizations. The website for this business is [infoties.espwebsite.com](http://infoties.espwebsite.com). The other is a custom design company on Etsy, where he personally designs a range of products, including mugs, hats, t-shirts and more. You can find out more on his website at [etsy.com/shop/custommelt](http://etsy.com/shop/custommelt). Trevell continues to make history at Aspire of WNY and the greater community.

ASPIRE OF WNY'S QUALITY  
PARTNERSHIP ON DIVERSITY AND  
INCLUSION PRESENTS -  
BLACK OWNED BUSINESSES

THESE ARE SOME OF OUR FAVORITES

### RESTAURANTS

- Freddie - J's
- Je Ne Sais Quoi
- Brothers
- Kalypso
- Shy's
- Ike & BG's
- The Heights
- The Hidden Exclusive Grill  
---Home Of The Original  
Philly Cheesesteak (S. Tier)
- Sunshine Vegan Eats
- Wing Kings
- Khari's Café
- The Dessert Parlor
- At Eleven
- Confections By Christina
- LaVerdad Cafe
- Chautauqua Mart (S. Tier)

### FASHION

- Good Taste Gift Shop
- Tier NYC
- Project 96 (p.96)
- Cafe Czen
- Mifland
- Acid Cupcakes LLC
- Cointel
- Nami Labs
- Abstract Illism
- Im Livin B
- Vingtingrashad
- City Swagg Fashion

### PERSONAL / SELF CARE

- Top Coat Nail Lounge
- Buffalo Braid Boss
- The Hair Hive
- Miss Body Language Fitness
- C Training
- A Jason Clemons Salon LLC (S. Tier)
- Glorious Beauty Salon & Supplies (S. Tier)

### ENTERTAINMENT

- Girl Gang Entertainment LLC
- WUFO Radio
- Tasteful Occasions LLC
- Its Tech Sports
- Jung Talk Podcast

### ESSENTIALS

- Up North Renovations
- Ben's Downtown Tire
- The Vanderbilt Team ( Real Estate )
- Hobson's Dry Cleaners
- Signature Cutz
- Nyce and Clean Auto Detailing (S. Tier)
- ASAP Plumbing (S. Tier)

### DIGITAL CREATORS

- AWR Studios
- Creative Connect ( Instagram )
- Diversify Buffalo ( Instagram )
- Brmdwtwn ( Instagram )
- DFams ( Instagram )

Please see these websites for a full list of other black owned businesses

<https://www.buffalorising.com/2020/06/buffalos-black-owned-restaurants/>  
<https://blackrestaurantweek716.com/participating-businesses/>  
<https://www.eatblackowned.com/>

HAPPY BLACK HISTORY MONTH



# Home Sweet Pride



# BUFFALO STRONG



# CHOOSE LOVE

Aaron Salter  
Zaire Goodman  
Ruth Whitfield  
Roberta A. Drury  
Andre Mackneil  
Celestine Chaney  
Pearl Young  
Margus D. Morrison  
Christopher Braden  
Katherine Massey  
Geraldine Talley  
Jennifer Warrington  
Heyward Patterson

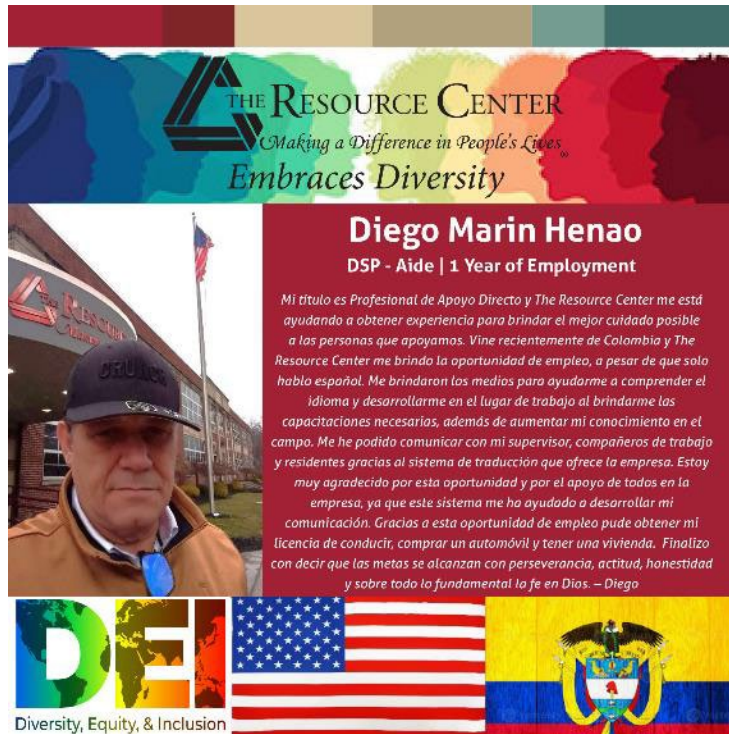
**REMEMBER THEIR NAMES**



# 2023 Pride Parade in Buffalo




# Celebrating DEI in the Workplace



**THE RESOURCE CENTER**  
*Making a Difference in People's Lives*  
**Embraces Diversity**

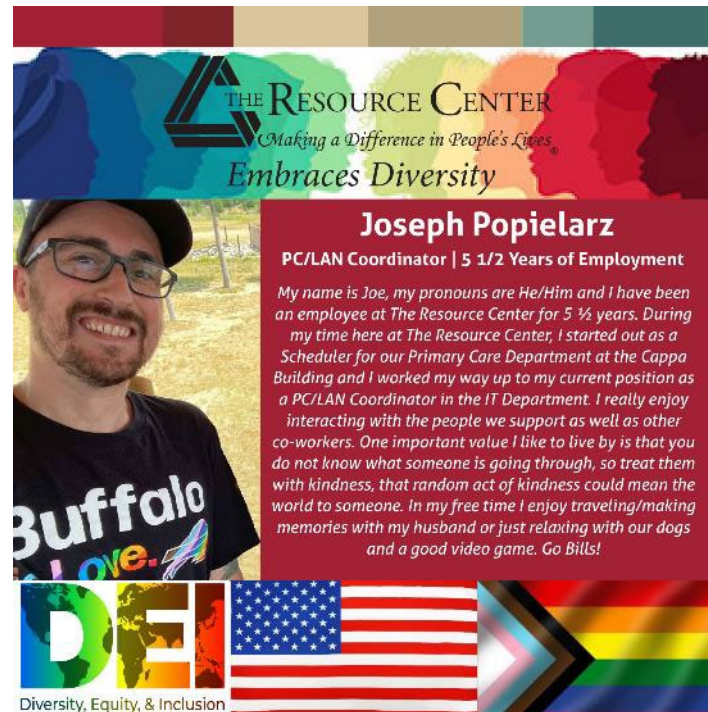
**Diego Marin Henao**  
DSP - Aide | 1 Year of Employment

*Mi título es Profesional de Apoyo Directo y The Resource Center me está ayudando a obtener experiencia para brindar el mejor cuidado posible a las personas que apoyamos. Vine recientemente de Colombia y The Resource Center me brindó la oportunidad de empleo, a pesar de que solo hablo español. Me brindaron los medios para ayudarme a comprender el idioma y desarrollarme en el lugar de trabajo al brindarme las capacitaciones necesarias, además de aumentar mi conocimiento en el campo. Me he podido comunicar con mi supervisor, compañeros de trabajo y residentes gracias al sistema de traducción que ofrece la empresa. Estoy muy agradecido por esta oportunidad y por el apoyo de todos en la empresa, ya que este sistema me ha ayudado a desarrollar mi comunicación. Gracias a esta oportunidad de empleo pude obtener mi licencia de conducir, comprar un automóvil y tener una vivienda. Finalizo con decir que las metas se alcanzan con perseverancia, actitud, honestidad y sobre todo lo fundamental la fe en Dios. – Diego*

**DEI** 

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion


## Employee Spotlights



**THE RESOURCE CENTER**  
*Making a Difference in People's Lives*  
**Embraces Diversity**

**Joseph Popielarz**  
PC/LAN Coordinator | 5 1/2 Years of Employment

*My name is Joe, my pronouns are He/Him and I have been an employee at The Resource Center for 5 1/2 years. During my time here at The Resource Center, I started out as a Scheduler for our Primary Care Department at the Cappa Building and I worked my way up to my current position as a PC/LAN Coordinator in the IT Department. I really enjoy interacting with the people we support as well as other co-workers. One important value I like to live by is that you do not know what someone is going through, so treat them with kindness, that random act of kindness could mean the world to someone. In my free time I enjoy traveling/making memories with my husband or just relaxing with our dogs and a good video game. Go Bills!*

**DEI** 

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion



**THE RESOURCE CENTER**  
*Making a Difference in People's Lives*  
**Embraces Diversity**

**Nanette Rances-Kilmer**  
Executive Admin Asst | 7 Years of Employment

*I am an Executive Administrative Assistant. TRC has provided me with the opportunity to showcase my diverse skills, individuality and unique experiences as an Asian immigrant. I find fulfillment in working for TRC due to its supportive work culture and person-centered environment. Additionally, I take pride in the fact that I am an integral part of the various programs that support people with disabilities in fulfilling their life goals within the community. **Fun Fact-** I was born in an outrigger boat in the middle of a swamp (Agusan Marsh, Philippines).*

**DEI** 

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

# Celebrating DEI in the Workplace



# Celebrating DEI in the Community



Pride Month



## LATINO HERITAGE CELEBRATION





**Can you share some  
successes and lessons  
learned?**

# What is next for your Agency?

**Questions?**