

Dungarvin

2014 ANCOR Direct Support Professional of the Year Nomination



Nicholas Macias – Dungarvin New Mexico
nomination submitted by Travis Goldman, Director

Adrian is a young man with severe mental illness, suffering from extreme paranoia and PTSD. Each day for Adrian is a struggle to sort reality from hallucination and to enjoy a typical life. Nick Macias looked upon this as a challenge and was determined to assure Adrian enjoys all the experiences of a typical adult in the community. Nick determined that Adrian had functional skills, in spite of his mental illness. With a focus on growth and independence, Nick implemented a training program to support Adrian to be independent with medication administration. To date, Nick has taught Adrian the names of each medication, the purpose and time of to administer. Nick's next step is the implementation of a medication minder box that alerts Adrian when it is time to take his medications and that he can access with minimal staff assistance. Despite some significant challenges and limitations of Adrian's, Nick sees beyond the disabilities and is supporting ways for Adrian to gain more independence in his life.

In his time with Dungarvin, Nick has taken a personal interest in each person he supports, but Adrian has attached himself to Nick in a way that is undeniable. Not only has Nick been able to support Adrian to increase his time in the community and confront his fears, he has also supported Adrian to grow into a healthy young man. Adrian models his personal appearance on Nick, adopting cowboy hats and boots as his typical attire and learning the art of charm and chivalry towards ladies. Nick has been a positive role model, and because of this, Adrian has become interested and open to new experiences and participating in activities that he previously would not have chosen.

At a recent IDT meeting, Nick professionally confronted Adrian's entire team to address concerns that he felt were being ignored or misinterpreted by the "professionals" on the team. From limited community access to medication efficacy, Nick addressed the team on Adrian's behalf. In his own words, "Adrian can't tell you that his medications aren't working, but I can tell you that he isn't sleeping. He can barely walk at times. Things have to change." Where others discount Adrian's

statements as hallucinatory and meaningless, Nick finds the grain of truth underlying the apparent rants and uses that to argue for what Adrian wants and needs. Nick truly believes in Adrian and the other men he supports.

Nick works with Adrian and the men at the Kimo house throughout the week. He adjusts his schedule to assure that he has the ability to support individual outcomes for each of the men he supports. While he has the potential to make more money working at other occupations, Nick continues to remain a Direct Support Professional as he sees what he is achieving and has a commitment to the people he supports.

Nick realizes that the four different men he supports are unique individuals and have different skills and needs. Where Adrian needs to feel like someone believes him, Keith needs to feel in complete control of his day. Nick supports each of them in meeting their goals through active listening and planning. Recently, when it was discussed that one of the men in the house wanted to go on a day trip fishing, Nick determined that all of the men could go fishing. The teams felt that this would not work as the men do not enjoy the same activities. Nick identified a location that offered a variety of options of interest to each of the men from fishing to swimming to hiking; something for each man to pursue. It was a successful trip and each of the men enjoyed themselves.

Staff and persons served who interact with Nick have a tremendous amount of respect for him. He is a role model in assisting Adrian through his mental health issues and is a leader of the other staff in how to approach each task and make it functional for the men. The other staff members are amazed at the focus and drive which Nick has to assure that each man living in the home has the best chance for a typical life.