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## **National Disability Provider Association Names Kelley Shepherd Recipient of 2023 Direct Support Professional of the Year Award for Leadership**

**MAY 2, 2023 (PITTSBURGH)** – The American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) awarded Kelley Shepherd, a direct support professional at Mainstay Life Services, with the 2023 Direct Support Professional of the Year Award for Leadership. She was recognized last week at ANCOR’s 2023 Annual Conference in Chicago. Shepherd was chosen from a record-breaking pool of more than 350 outstanding nominees.

“I couldn’t be more thrilled for Kelley. Not only does she work to grow her knowledge, but she leads by example and goes above and beyond for Mainstay,” said Kim Sonafelt, chief executive officer of Mainstay Life Services. “Kelley’s professional leadership didn’t go unnoticed, and we are so happy that she was recognized for her commitment to the field.”



Since 2007, ANCOR’s annual DSP of the Year awards recognize outstanding direct support professionals (DSPs) who deliver long-term services and supports to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The awards celebrate the important role DSPs play in ensuring people with I/DD have what they need to thrive and be included in the community. These awards also seek to raise awareness about

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a direct support workforce in crisis. Inadequate investments in this essential workforce have led to a decades-long severe shortage of DSPs, which has only been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic and has accelerated into a crisis that threatens access to critically needed services.

“From voter education and self-advocacy initiatives to supporting people to pursue their career aspirations and so much more, direct support professionals like Kelley Shepherd make clear the crucial role this workforce plays in communities across the country,” said Diane Beaström, president of ANCOR’s Board of Directors and president & chief executive officer of Koinonia, a disability service provider based in Independence, Ohio. “ANCOR is proud to celebrate Kelley Shepherd and the 53 other professionals who comprise the 2023 class of outstanding honorees.”

“The outstanding DSPs that were honored this year deliver life-enhancing supports amid no shortage of significant challenges, not the least of which is a long-standing crisis in the ability of providers to recruit and retain qualified DSPs,” said Barbara Merrill, chief executive officer for ANCOR. “Through it all, professionals like Kelley Shepherd demonstrate an unwavering commitment to community inclusion and to the people they support.”

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### **About Mainstay Life Services**

Mainstay Life Services ([MainstayLifeServices.org](https://www.MainstayLifeServices.org)) is a nonprofit organization providing residential services, community services, and other supports to people with developmental disabilities and their families. We are committed to assisting the people in our care to reach their fullest potentials within their communities.

### **About ANCOR**

For more than 50 years, the American Network of Community Options and Resources ([ancor.org](https://www.ancor.org)) has been a leading advocate for the critical role service providers play in enriching the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). As a national nonprofit trade association, ANCOR represents 2,000+ organizations employing more than a half-million professionals who together serve more than a million individuals with I/DD. Our mission is to advance the ability of our members to support people with I/DD to fully participate in their communities.