



Kevin O’Riordan Award Presentation and Music Celebration for Older American’s Month

May 28, 2025

Kevin O’Riordan was the executive director of GMSS for eighteen years and, shortly before his death in 2014, the Board of Directors created the “Kevin O’Riordan Award.” This award is given annually by the Board to an employee or shared living provider who exemplifies caring, professional commitment, and effective advocacy for the people we support, and who strives to ensure individuals with disabilities are meaningfully included and valued within the community.

Nominations are made by peers, our staff, and GMSS shared living providers, and this year’s slate of nominees was stellar. Truly, each nominee deserved to win. The Board weighed carefully the nomination letters before making their choice.

Our 2025 winner dedicated his life and professional career to helping others, choosing to serve those with some of the greatest needs. He did this with intelligence, thoughtfulness, patience, empathy, compassion, and a fantastic sense of humor. He was steadfast and while he appeared quiet, that quiet only masked his deep reflective nature. Those lucky enough to know him well also got to see his fantastic wit. He was also brave. When the person he supported most recently lost his home we had to quickly create a new home for him, and to do that we needed a new leader. Our winner stepped up and into that role with humility, open-mindedness, his huge heart, and his ever-present commitment to excellence. He became a trusted leader and he did so very quickly.

This year’s award is going to Rick Gioia, who we lost tragically and unexpectedly on February 8. He was nominated by Corey Cayton who wrote:

I would like to make a posthumous nomination for consideration to be presented to Rick Gioia’s family to honor his life of service and dedication to others. Rick spent a lifetime in the service of mental health and love and support of his community members with developmental disabilities. Everywhere he lived and travelled he shined his giving light to those who needed it. The beauty of Rick was his ability to care for vulnerable persons while simultaneously being both vulnerable himself and a steady object in the room as they say.

It is an uncanny ability which cannot be learned. He just was what others needed. His most recent care these past few years for J exemplified all which is right and good in this chaotic world. His team loved him and respected his humanness. His adopted canine friend Fiona, was brought from a chaotic world into his loving care by the universe itself and they were a perfect match. He shared her with his team and those he cared for. I for one thank you Rick and will honor you in my heart all my days.

We were pleased Rick's brother, Jim, joined us for the ceremony to accept the award on Rick's behalf.