

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Arthur Webb** <[Arthur@arthurwebbgroup.com](mailto:Arthur@arthurwebbgroup.com)>

Date: Sun, Jan 25, 2015 at 12:14 PM

Subject: Extraordinary Surprise

To: "Susan Constantino ([sconstantino@cpofnys.org](mailto:sconstantino@cpofnys.org))"

<[sconstantino@cpofnys.org](mailto:sconstantino@cpofnys.org)>, "Peter Pierri ([Peter@iacny.org](mailto:Peter@iacny.org))"

<[Peter@iacny.org](mailto:Peter@iacny.org)>, "Ann Hardiman ([annh@nysacra.org](mailto:annh@nysacra.org))"

<[annh@nysacra.org](mailto:annh@nysacra.org)>, "Kerry Delaney ([kerry.a.delaney@opwdd.ny.gov](mailto:kerry.a.delaney@opwdd.ny.gov))"

<[kerry.a.delaney@opwdd.ny.gov](mailto:kerry.a.delaney@opwdd.ny.gov)>, "courtney burke

(<[courtney.burke@exec.ny.gov](mailto:courtney.burke@exec.ny.gov)>)" <[courtney.burke@exec.ny.gov](mailto:courtney.burke@exec.ny.gov)>

Folks:

Lessons to Learn:

I had a pleasant surprise and an inspiring moment this weekend. At the recent YAI Management Summit, I had an opportunity to meet Murray Schneps for the first time. He made available to all the participants (over 200 managers) a signed copy of his book he released in 2014, **I See Your Face Before Me: A Father's Promise.** Both he and I found it strange that we had never met even though I became Commissioner of OMRDD in June, 1983.

I read his book over the weekend. It is smart, informative, and passionate, and quite blunt. It was an easy read because Murray used a very straightforward style of prose. There is no question that he was an ardent and effective advocate for the rights of persons with developmental disabilities. His drive for community living set in motion a generation of success. The forceful use of the Willowbrook Review Panel pushed the state to increase funding, staffing and framed a commitment to community living. Of course, not every state official was happy being the target of the Review Panel. Nevertheless, it had a profound effect on public policy. For me, it created the platform to initiate the closure of several state institutions including the infamous Willowbrook in 1987. More important, was the commitment to community living that catapulted the tremendous growth in community residences.

We were fortunate to have leaders like Governor Carey, Tom Coughlin and Jim Introne to forge meaningful public policy. Their courage was forceful. The support by Governor Mario Cuomo was instrumental in launching 30 years of growth and change. Perhaps the past helps links the present with another Governor Cuomo.

While I stay connected to the past, I am not tied to the past, nor reminisce about it. I look to the past for inspiration and by reading Murray's book we learn what it takes to drive public policy and in fomenting a social revolution. In the book, there are also reminders of our painful past.

Murray's love for his child is emotional and compelling. Murray was indeed one of the warriors of the Willowbrook wars and we are indebted to him for writing this book.

The book also convinces me that as we saw the great commitment to community residences drive change, we now need to wrap ourselves around a new passion by co-creating a system of care that supports the life experiences of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Perhaps this is what we mean by "person-centered care."

Thank you.

Arthur