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## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### National Disability Mentoring Day Provides Unique Opportunities for Putnam Residents

**Carmel, New York** .....Twenty-three Putnam County disabled residents were given the opportunity to work in a field that interested them as **CAREERS for People with Disabilities, Inc. (CAREERS)** coordinated the second Disability Mentoring Day on October 17<sup>th</sup>. A collaboration with Putnam County Executive Mary Ellen Odell and County Departments, the event paired mentors from throughout the County with disabled individuals interested in learning about employment opportunities.

Putnam and Westchester Counties are among the 200 locations across the country participating in National Disability Mentoring Day on October 17<sup>th</sup>. The event connects nearly 16,500 students and job seekers with disabilities to thousands of employers nationwide each year.



Captain Martin of the Putnam County Sherriff's Office and CHS Student Andrew Wheelock.

“Putnam’s Second Disability Mentoring Day is a great opportunity for disabled individuals and County employees to share their strengths and their interest in the community, while learning from each other, “remarked CAREERS Executive Director Tina Cornish-Lauria. “In addition to providing people with disabilities the chance to experience jobs first-hand, this day provides an opportunity for employers to appreciate the diversity that individuals with disabilities bring to the workplace.”

Participants included mentees from CAREERS, PARC, Carmel High School and Putnam Family & Community Services that were matched with volunteer County mentors, based on the interests of each mentee. County departments included Personnel, Tourism, Bureau of Emergency Services, Consumer Affairs, Highway and Facilities Department, Youth Bureau and the Office for the Aging, among others. Participants worked side by side with mentors for several hours

performing tasks that included organizing documents, inspecting vehicles, data entry and washing cars, among others.

Carmel High School student Andrew Wheelock described his day in the Putnam County Sheriff's Department to County Executive Odell and many of the mentors and participants who gathered at Cornerstone Park in Carmel at the end of the day, "I was supposed to be washing cars, but Captain Martin decided to let me have a little fun, so he put me at the Communications desk to see how that worked, then he put me with one of his Deputies to ride a little bit to see how that worked; then I washed cars," Andrew explained. "I wish it was longer. I liked hanging with the officers, I want to be one."

County staff were equally impressed with their mentees for the day. Kelli Sposato of the Probation Department thought Carmel High School Student Miguel Melendez was great, "he was a hard worker, did anything I asked and I'd love to work with him again, I hope he comes back!" Gene Funicelli of the Department said, "The front desk of the Probation Department is where all the action is... He had expressed an interest in the field, so I gave him my card and he will certainly be welcome back again."

"We are fortunate that the County Executive and her staff went above and beyond to make our participants feel welcome and needed. Everyone involved valued the experience and thought the day was extremely beneficial. Many commented that the day was just not long enough and even asked if we could do it more than once a year," Tina Cornish-Lauria said.

#### **About CAREERS for People with Disabilities, Inc.**

Since 1987, CAREERS has provided job placement and support services to people with disabilities in Westchester and Putnam Counties, and provided services to over 2,200 other disabled individuals. CAREERS' mission is to insure that all disabled individuals find sustained, meaningful employment in the communities in which they live. We work one-on-one with each client and employer to facilitate ongoing success in the workplace and help those with disabilities reach their maximum level of self-support and self-reliance. All of CAREERS' services are provided free of charge to clients and employers.

For additional information about how CAREERS helps disabled individuals, or employers in need of qualified help, contact CAREERS' Valhalla office, which serves central and lower Westchester at 914-741-8500, or the Carmel office, which serves northern Westchester and Putnam Counties, at 845-225-8007. For more information, please visit [www.careersforpeoplewithdisabilities.org](http://www.careersforpeoplewithdisabilities.org).

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