



Speaker Bios

Loreen Loonie is currently the Director of Community Relations at Independence Care System, a nonprofit managed long term care organization for people with physical disabilities and chronic illnesses. She manages the organization's marketing, outreach, internal and external communications and oversees social/educational programming for members including a travel training contract with New York City Transit.

Prior to joining the staff at ICS, Ms. Loonie was the Director of the Angela Perez Center for People with Disabilities at the YWCA of the City of New York. While there, Ms. Loonie managed a 20-year-old program for young people with disabilities ages 13-21 called the Networking Project for Young People with Disabilities, an inclusive summer camp program and an after school program in a NYC high school for students with and without disabilities. While at the YW, she also helped to create inclusive arts and computer programming for people with disabilities.

Ms. Loonie worked on the advocacy staff of the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association (Now United Spinal Association) for nine years, serving as the New York City Regional Advocate and then as the Director of the Advocacy Program. While at EPVA, Ms. Loonie worked on many accessibility issues in New York City, including the One Step Campaign to get more retail stores to replace one step barriers with ramps, and worked extensively on helping people with disabilities to get more familiar with using accessible mass transit. This work included training over 500 bus operators to be sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities and over 1000 people with disabilities to use buses and subways. Ms. Loonie has trained advocates both locally and nationally to encourage them to begin programs to help people with disabilities use mass transit.

Ms. Loonie has a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Baruch College School of Public Affairs and a Bachelors of Arts Degree in Communications from SUNY Plattsburgh.

Rick Surpin is founder, president and CEO of Independence Care System (ICS), a nonprofit Medicaid managed long-term care plan in New York City designed to assist Medicaid-eligible adults with physical disabilities to live independently and participate fully in community life.

Surpin is widely regarded as one of the most successful social entrepreneurs of his generation. He is a past recipient of the Business Enterprise Trust Award for Social Responsibility for "courage, integrity and social vision in business." He also has been recognized as an "Outstanding Social Entrepreneur" by the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, created by the founder of the World Economic Forum.

ICS is one of a network of four business enterprises founded by Surpin that focus on creating high-quality jobs for home care and other paraprofessional health care workers and high-quality care for adults with physical disabilities and the elderly. The other ICS-affiliated organizations are:

- *Cooperative Home Care Associates* (CHCA), a 23-year-old, worker-owned home care agency in the South Bronx, which has more than 1,100 home care aides and \$30 million in annual revenue; Surpin has chaired the board since its inception and served as president and CEO for its first 15 years.
- *The Skill Center*, a nonprofit organization that provides training and support services for new and current employees of CHCA; Surpin chairs the board.

- *PHI*, a national nonprofit health care employment and advocacy organization, which works to improve the lives of people who need home or residential care by improving the lives of the paraprofessional workers who provide that care; Surpin has chaired the board since its inception.

Marilyn E. Saviola is Director of Advocacy at Independence Care System. She is a recognized leader in the area of advocacy for access to health care for people with disabilities and highly regarded for her expertise in community-based home care services.

With a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from New York University, Ms. Saviola started her career as a Rehabilitation Counselor at Goldwater Memorial Hospital. She worked there for eleven years assisting people with severe physical disabilities who wanted to leave the hospital and return to the community.

From 1983 through 1998, Ms. Saviola was the Executive Director of the Center for Independence of the Disabled in New York (CIDNY). Under her leadership, CIDNY became established as a premier independent living center, recognized for its expertise in advocacy and services for people with disabilities.

As a community advocate, Ms. Saviola has served on many advisory committees and is a member of several organizations and professional associations. They include: past chair of the Manhattan Borough Disability Advisory Group, board member of the Association of Independent Living Centers in New York, member of the New York City Medicaid Managed Care Task Force, and board member of Disabled in Action.

Matthew P. Sapolin was appointed to serve as the Commissioner of the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg in October of 2002. MOPD works hand-in-hand with other City agencies to assure that the voice of the disabled community is represented and that City programs and policies address the needs of people with disabilities.

Under Commissioner Sapolin's leadership, MOPD has reemerged as a voice for the disabled community, with advocates responding by working together with City Government to reach mutually beneficial outcomes. While in office, Sapolin's accomplishments have included: the launch of ShopABLE New York, an initiative that works with neighborhood business associations to create barrier-free shopping districts; making sure that the operators at "311" Citizen Services Hotline have the latest in accessibility technology for the disabled; working with the Administration to pass legislation requiring accessible waterborne and Taxi transportation services; participating in the NYC2012 Paralympics process; acting as Chairman of the new Building Code Accessibility Committee; creating a series of publications on Universal Design for use by design professionals and building code officials; serving as Local Coordinator for National Disability Mentoring Day; and successfully shepherding critical legislation creating rent controls for people with disabilities on fixed incomes.

Commissioner Sapolin also serves as an Adjunct Professor in the City University of New York's Graduate School of Professional Studies, teaching a course in the Certificate Program for Disability Studies. He created a curriculum that includes topics such as the economics and business of disability; quality management of disability organizations; and leadership in public policy issues. He serves on a variety of boards and advisory councils, and has been presented with numerous awards and accolades for his successes.

Born in 1970, Commissioner Sapolin became blind at the age of 5 as a result of bilateral retinoblastoma. After being educated in mainstream public schools, Sapolin received his BA at New York University as well as a Masters of Public Health Administration from Wagner School of Public

Service at New York University, where he also served as the Co-Captain of the Varsity Wrestling team. Sapolin was raised in Long Island New York, and now lives on the West Side of Manhattan. He enjoys spending time with his wife Candra, 17-year-old son Trevor, 13-year-old daughter Toscani, and his faithful Guide Dog Compass.

Yvonne J. Graham, Assistant to the Brooklyn Borough President, has been a pioneer in the area of public health for over twenty years. She oversees health care policy and all human services for the borough president.

Ms Graham's vision was critical to the 2005 founding of Brooklyn's first Center on Health Disparities, which is working to reduce cardiovascular disease, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, infant mortality, asthma, and diabetes among minority communities. The center is an innovative partnership with the Borough President's Office, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, and the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health.

In an effort to increase the number of women in leadership positions in government, business, and industry, Ms. Graham spearheaded the Women's Leadership Initiative, a partnership between academic institutions, government agencies, community-based organizations, and the private sector that brings women together for dialogue and networking.

Born and raised in Jamaica, West Indies, Ms. Graham moved to New York in 1979. As a registered nurse, she worked in the emergency room of Brookdale Hospital. In addition to being an RN, she holds a Bachelor's Degree in Health Administration and Community Health from St. Joseph's College and a Master's Degree in Public Health from Hunter College. She also completed the Executive Program in Business Administration at Columbia University School of Business, and recently an Honorary Doctor of Law degree was conferred on her by her alma mater St. Joseph's College.

Ms. Graham has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors for her achievement in community service, including the YWCA's Women of Distinction Award; National Association of Black Social Workers' Public Citizen of the Year Award; the Marcus Garvey Medal of Honor; the Ellen Lurie Community Service Award from the Community Service Society of New York; the Frederick Douglass Medal of Honor, which is awarded by the New York State Governor to distinguished African-Americans; the American Lung Association's Distinguished Award for Leadership, Creativity, and Caring in Promotion of Community Health; and the Harriet Tubman Award from the Harriet Tubman Awards Jubilee, Inc.

Juan Carlos Alcaraz is the Founder and President of Artists on Wheels, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people with disabilities express themselves artistically. He is also an artist himself, working with many materials—from found objects to ceramics to clay moldings—as well as an art instructor to many members of Independence Care System. ICS has been a partner with Artists on Wheels since its inception.

Born in Jamaica, Queens and raised primarily in Colombia, Alcaraz credits his father, a mechanical engineer, with sparking his interest in building, manipulating shapes and materials, working with different media—from fabric to metal, and drawing and design. In 1991, Alcaraz incurred a spinal cord injury as the result of an assault on him when he was living in Columbia. During the process of rehabilitation, he rediscovered his love of art and attended the Beauty Academy of Arts in Bogotá, Columbia. He moved to New York City in 2001 and began to look for opportunities to express himself artistically, which culminated in the creation of Artists on Wheels. Alcaraz has been a member of ICS since 2001 and cites ICS as a prime source of support that keeps him doing all of the things he loves to do.

Among his creations, Alcaraz built a mold for a small-scale memorial of the Twin Towers in the wake of 9/11, which his ICS students mass-produced, selling hundreds of them to nearby wholesalers. He

designed trophies for the top three wheelchair-users who won the 2002 New York City Marathon. And his *Time Machine*, on display at ICS, was exhibited at the Henry DeFord III Gallery in Long Island City earlier this year, in a show entitled "Made in the MFTA (Materials for the Arts)." That show featured works created from reusable materials and was hosted by the Citi (formerly Citigroup) Department of Fine Art.

Taria Rogers, age 27, is currently the Program Coordinator for the Networking Project for Young Adults with Disabilities at the YWCA-NYC. Born with Muscular Dystrophy, she was first a participant in the program, and three years ago, took over a leadership role for the 20-year-old project, which serves young people aged 13-21 who have a range of disabilities.

Using the knowledge gained growing up with disabilities in New York City, Taria employs a mix of hard earned common sense and her extraordinary sense of self to show other women, those with and without disabilities, the possibilities of their lives. Now a resident of East New York Brooklyn, Taria is a strong advocate for disability rights, women's rights and is a frequent public speaker on the issues of women, sexuality, parenting and disability. With great candor, Rogers shares her story of coming to terms with pregnancy as a woman with a disability and with the loss of her precious infant son Mekhi, in an effort to help other women who may be struggling with parental issues and hardships.

Born in Staten Island and bred in Brooklyn, Taria has a bachelor's degree in Psychology from the College of Staten Island. She is one of the first Brooklyn members of Independence Care System and cites the organization's ability to change with her needs as the most valuable thing about ICS for her.