

## Council Chairperson April Dunn Wins National Self-Advocacy Award

July 15, 2019

April Dunn, the Council's Chairperson, was awarded one of two Champions of Equal Opportunity (CEO) Awards for self-advocacy by the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) at their Annual Conference in New Orleans on July 10th. These awards are given to recognize individuals who share and promote NACDD's values of self-determination, independence, productivity and inclusion. Former Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu was also presented with a CEO Award for national policy for her work in supporting Councils and Council funding when she served in the U. S. Senate.



*April Dunn pictured front, Sandee Winchell, La DD Council Executive Director, back left, Donna Meltzer, NACDD CEO, back center*

Since being introduced to LaCAN, the Council's grassroots advocacy network, April quickly became its most active member. She was soon not only in the audience at legislative committee meetings, but at the table testifying. She has developed relationships with legislators and every year attends dozens of legislative committee meetings where disability issues are considered. April was instrumental in advocating for the passage of two Louisiana laws granting students with disabilities access to pathways to a high school diploma: Acts 833 and 303. Louisiana passed Act 833 in 2014, which provided a pathway to students with disabilities to earn a high school diploma. This was followed by the passage of Act 303 in 2016, which allowed previous students with disabilities who had earned enough Carnegie credits, but had not met the state required performance on standardized exit exams, to receive a high school diploma. Collectively, these two laws have enhanced the outcomes and futures of thousands of individuals

with disabilities across Louisiana.

April has also had a huge impact on increasing inclusive opportunities in the community. She strongly advocates her core belief that no one should live or spend their days in segregated settings! April has testified several times before the legislature in support of funding for additional home and community-based waiver services and other individual and family support services. She also strongly advocates for a living wage for Direct Support Professionals. During April's tenure as the Council chair and as a member of the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities System Transformation Core Stakeholders Group, Louisiana completely transformed its DD waiver system.

Through her advocacy efforts, April had the opportunity to meet Governor John Bel Edwards on several occasions. She later became employed in the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs where she is a valued employee and subsequently starred in a [video with the Governor](#) promoting the employment of people with disabilities! April's work on employment initiatives in the Governor's Office also led to her participation in new training videos being used by the State of Louisiana to promote the hiring of people with disabilities in state government.

April leads by example, but is not shy about encouraging others to get involved in advocacy. She understands the importance of being involved in systems change advocacy and passionately communicates that to others.

April has been a member of the Council since November 2014, serving as Chair since October 2017, and previously one term as Vice-Chair. She is a graduate of Partners in Policymaking and is a member of numerous other advisory councils, task forces, and work groups.

Congratulations April on receipt of this prestigious award!

## Contact Us

LaDDC News is the electronic newsletter for the LA Developmental Disabilities Council. If there are any questions about the information above, contact the Council by replying to this email, or calling the toll free number listed below:

phone: 1-800-450-8108

email: [info@laddc.org](mailto:info@laddc.org)

website: [www.laddc.org](http://www.laddc.org)

facebook: [www.facebook.com/LaDDCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/LaDDCouncil)

twitter: [www.twitter.com/laddcouncil](https://www.twitter.com/laddcouncil)



Louisiana Developmental  
Disabilities Council

Click [HERE](#) to view all recent LaDDC News articles