

NADE



THE ADVOCATE

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Visit

<http://www.nade.org/about-nade/nade-corporate-members/>

for information about becoming a corporate member.

## President's Message



Greetings NADE members!

At the close of an unconventional year, it was only fitting that the NADE President, Sara Winn, would pass the gavel in an equally unconventional way. Instead of the transition taking place at a National Training Conference, where members could offer Sara their gratitude for a job well-done and she could share her insights with the in-coming President, it took place without any fan-fare or speeches. This quiet exchange neither defines her term as NADE President, nor the year ahead.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sara for performing the duties of the NADE President so gracefully and tirelessly for the last year and one half. Even though it seemed the nation was on hold since March 2020, Sara led the board through adjustments in meeting styles, training, recognitions, and engaging with the SSA Administrators and legislators. As a result, NADE is stronger and more flexible than ever!

Now that there is a light at the end of this pandemic tunnel, I hope we are all feeling more energized and hopeful. Although we will not have a national training conference this year, we're already planning for 2022 (Vermont) and 2023 (Montana). Until then, we hope to offer video conferences with SSA Administrators and continue with some of the more traditional events. I am confident that NADE will continue to grow and evolve with it's members who have proven to be strong and resilient, and VERY creative!

I look forward to working for you in the year to come,

Marjorie Garcia



June is NADE membership renewal month. It's a perfect time to continue your support of the National Association of Disability Examiners. If you have let your membership lapse, or considering joining, the time is right!

NADE is a professional organization for analysts, medical consultants, support staff, hearings officers, field office representatives, administrators, and managers involved in disability determination. Retirees are also welcome! Membership dues are NADE's primary income source. Your support of NADE allows the association to perform essential duties that promote the overall mission.

#### NADE's Mission:

- To foster, promote and participate in activities designed to increase the understanding of the disability programs by the medical community and the general public
- To improve the documentation of applications for disability benefits and the evaluation of medical and vocational information obtained in connection with such applications
- To provide a forum for the discussion of problems related to the adjudication of disability claims
- To develop professional standards and training opportunities for all individuals engaged in the adjudication of disability claims

NADE serves as an advocate for disability employees working on the front line. NADE has regular meetings with members of Congress to communicate your perspective, your concerns. Congress often invites NADE board members to testify as expert witnesses for Congressional hearings on disability issues. NADE also hosts regular meetings with SSA's political leadership and policy makers, and other governmental agencies (GAO, OMB, etc.) to bring attention to the real issues of those who do the work of adjudicating disability claims and serving the public.

NADE has many opportunities for leadership and active participation. There are opportunities on local, regional, and national levels. NADE's strength comes from the diversity of its members and their willingness to be involved in molding the future of disability case processing and customer service.

NADE publishes *The Advocate* quarterly, which provides current industry news, highlights NADE Chapter activities across the nation, and much, much more! NADE members have access to archive editions of The Advocate, news, event announcements and more through our website: [www.nade.org](http://www.nade.org).

Networking with disability examiners across the nation has immeasurable returns. Foremost is sharing best practices and open discussion of common concerns with others who work directly in the disability industry. NADE provides educational and networking opportunities specific to our work through training conferences held in a different state each year.

Your work is more than a job – it is a career! Through NADE, you can deepen your understanding of our complicated and ever-changing industry. Connecting and working with others who work directly in the industry can effectuate positive changes in yourself as a person and as a professional.

NADE membership dues can be paid directly at [www.nade.org](http://www.nade.org), under the "Join NADE" tab, then "Become a Member"

## UPCOMING EVENTS



- ➔ **NATIONAL DISABILITY PROFESSIONALS' WEEK** June 1 to July 31. Theme: Hit Me with Your Best Shot!  
NADE understands that some chapters need to celebrate on a non-traditional week. Submit your entry for the Best NDPW Celebration to Marcia.Golden@ssa.gov by COB 08/09/2021. Awards will be announced by 08/31/2021. First place is \$25 to the winning chapter; second place is \$15.
- ➔ **NATIONAL AWARDS NOMINATIONS** Find criteria and nomination forms [here](#). Deadline to submit is June 25th
- ➔ **REGIONAL DIRECTOR ELECTIONS** for Southwest, Northeast, Mid-Atlantic and Great Plains regions, due by June 30.
- ➔ **NATIONAL ELECTIONS** for President Elect, Secretary and Treasurer. Date TBA.



We need volunteers to serve on NADE's national committees for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Serving on committees is a great way to meet other NADE members and to get involved with our projects. If you'd like to find out what committees there are and how to volunteer, contact your Regional Director (RD). You can find your RD on page 13.

## DYNAMIC DUO



Jennifer and Hannah Pounds are NADE members in Raleigh, North Carolina. We took some time to interview this mother-daughter duo and find out what inspires their commitment to DDS, THADE and NADE.

**Jennifer, how long have you been a NADE member? Why did you join?**

I joined NADE in October 2004. Honestly, I joined because a fellow co-worker kept hounding me. I just did it to get her off my back! It wasn't until Donnie Hayes asked me to fill the position of Southeast Regional Award Chair that I really saw all NADE had to offer me. I attended the Southeast Regional Conference that year in Birmingham, Alabama. The SSA Commissioner was there! Officials from ODD, ODP and the Inspector General's Office were also there, and I couldn't believe they were interested in what I had to say! I left that conference fired up and ready to spread the word about NADE.

**Hannah, same question.**

I joined NADE as soon as I could after being hired in 2019. I already felt like I was part of the family, though! I had attended the National Conference in Arlington in 2018, prior to being hired. Mom was President of NADE at the time. Everyone who attended welcomed me with big, open arms! It was a no-brainer for me to join once I was hired with DDS.

**Hannah, you've been an analyst for two years. What do you like about the position? What did you do before?**

Prior to joining DDS, I was a college student at UNCW and worked as a server in a retirement community. I graduated in 2018 and moved back to Raleigh. My mom suggested I apply at DDS, and I am so glad I did!

What I enjoy most about my position is being able to serve people who need it most in our community. Talking with claimants every day and helping them makes me so happy! I also love the work atmosphere around DDS. My work family is amazing — the people within my unit and everyone at DDS. Since I visited my mom at DDS for so many years, I came into this job surrounded by people who support me and want me to succeed.

**Jennifer, tell us about your journey up the ladder at DDS. What did you do before? Do you think NADE helped you get where you are today?**

I started as a Disability Examiner I at DDS in 1999. I was a young mother with two little girls. I wanted a job where I could grow in my career, but also be a great mom. I was promoted within two years to Disability Analyst II, then a Disability Analyst III one year later. After five years of working at DDS, I became a Case Consultant. I held that a position for two years until my current position. I've been an Operations Supervisor II since April, 2007.

NADE definitely helped me grow in my profession and inspired me to aim high at DDS. I think serving on the executive board of NADE and working so closely with the Associate Deputy Commissioners of ODD and ODP prepared me to pursue my Certified Public Manager's Degree. I consider that the biggest accomplishment of my career. Without my experience with NADE in all the different positions I've held, I don't think I would've been mentally prepared to take on such a challenge.

**Hannah, do you aspire to leadership at DDS and/or NADE? Might we have a JP dynasty?**

I think I'm a natural leader. I do aspire to leadership at DDS and NADE. I strive to be the best at everything I do, and to help my co-workers along the way. Being a leader and mentor is definitely a goal of mine. Having watched Mom excel and be such a great leader has really inspired me. I'd love to live up to her name.

**Hannah, what's it like to work with your mom?**

When I first started working at DDS, it was a comfort having someone I could go to with anything about the job. Mom not only has knowledge of the job, but supports me and pushes me to be my best self. Having someone who understands and has been in my shoes has been amazing. Spending extra time with Mom is an added bonus! Before the pandemic, we ate lunch together almost every day. Now during the pandemic I work side-by-side with her! I see how hard she works and how much she does for DDS. Mom's been my role model in life. Having her as a role model for my career makes me so happy.

**Jennifer, what's it like to work with Hannah?**

Honestly, the first year Hannah worked at DDS, I only saw her at lunch. I'll always cherish our lunch dates, with our small talk, mom/daughter talks, helping her work through a complicated case - I'm so proud of her. Since I sit next to her, now that we're working from home, I get to hear her on the phone with claimants and see her work. She helps her co-workers when they're behind, and goes above and beyond for the claimants. I hope to attend a NADE conference as a retiree some day and support her as NADE president. She has a lot of JP in her, so who knows?

**Hannah: what have you learned from Jennifer at work and/or life?**

I am the woman I am today because of my mom and how she's raised me. She taught me to be a God-fearing, loving, hard-working person, and to care for everyone. She taught me to be my best self and always give my best. She taught me to work hard, even when things don't go my way. Being able to watch my mom work and grow with this agency motivates me to work just as hard.

**Jennifer: what have you learned from Hannah?**

Oh, where do I begin? I've learned to enjoy life, and to soak up every opportunity I get. Hannah lives life without fear. I'm a much more introverted person. My husband is the extrovert. I'm comfortable just staying at home watching *Gilmore Girls*. Hannah, on the other hand, wants to live life to the fullest! She wants to get out and enjoy the sunshine. I call her a social butterfly. She loves people. Thanks to her, I've learned spread my wings and get out more. If there is something I want to try, I'll do it! I've also learned from her not to let the job run me. When the work day is over, it is over. I can enjoy what life has for me and let the stress of DDS wait until tomorrow.



## FRAUDBUSTERS

### Reports from the OIG website



**Shreveport, LA** - John Owings, age 60, was sentenced on May 12, 2021 to 21 months in prison, followed by two years of supervised release for stealing Social Security benefits. He was also ordered to pay more than \$200,000 in restitution. Owings applied for disability benefits in 2008 and continued to receive those benefits through June, 2017. He returned to work in 2012 as a surgeon making \$22,000 per month, then was promoted to trauma chief at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, where he earned over \$44,000 per month. He failed to tell SSA about his return to work, and used the benefits to pay for his personal expenses and his hobby: coin collecting.

“Dr. Ownings took advantage of a program designed to benefit those who need assistance due to their inability to work,” said Acting US attorney, Alexander Van Hook. “I’d like to thank the agents with the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General for doing an outstanding job on this case. We’ll continue to prosecute those who abuse the system in this way.”

**Cedar Rapids, IA** - Dustin Ruzicka, age 50, was sentenced on April 16, 2021 to one year plus one day in federal prison for SSI fraud. He was also ordered to pay nearly \$106,000 in restitution. He began receiving benefits in 1992 for a foot condition and an adjustment disorder. In 2004, he started a stand-up comedy act, “Bustin’ Dustin,” and in 2010 he started working for a dietary supplements company. On social media, he boasted about his earnings, his ‘entrepreneurship,’ and posed with his BMW. He failed to report his employment, income and improvement in function to SSA. Agents from OIG investigated, including attending one of his stand-up comedy shows. During his performance, he was continuously on his feet and didn’t appear to be in any pain. When the agents identified themselves and interviewed him at his home later, he walked with a pronounced limp.

**Orlando, FL** - Isis Baldwin, a 39-year-old SSA employee, filed for SSI benefits on behalf of her minor child. The application was approved and Baldwin appointed as the child’s payee. In April 2019, SSA initiated a CDR. During the redetermination inquiry, Baldwin made material misrepresentations regarding her child’s living arrangements during an interview with an SSA employee. Baldwin subsequently submitted a statement to SSA in which she falsely represented that her child had moved to a different address. Baldwin also provided a falsified lease agreement in support of her false claim regarding her child’s new living arrangements. She was ordered to pay \$11,700 in restitution for making false statements to a federal agency. She was also sentenced to three years’ probation and 45 days of work duty at the Brevard County Work Farm.

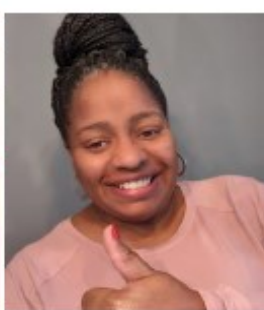
## National Bullying Day 2021

February 24 was International STAND UP to Bullying Day. Stand Up Bullying Day is a day where we Lift Each Other Up and work towards a kinder and more inclusive future for everyone. It is a day that brings awareness to the prevalence of bullying. Bullying happens daily in our society in schools, workplaces, and yes even in the privacy of our own homes. Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children, siblings and even married couples that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. This behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. All who are bullied and who bully others may have serious long lasting problems. These problems as we know can cause long-term mental disabilities in persons who are bullies and who have been bullied. National Bullying day was formulated to raise awareness and to get everyone to stand up against bullying. To show our support and solidarity on this day OKADE banned together with our pink shirts and thumbs up to give support and stand against bullying. You can find more information on this day and the organization who formed it at <https://www.pinkshirtday.ca/>

Submitted by, Cynthia Thompson



Ayo May



Jenise Brooks



Joycelyn Cook



Melvin Carr



Allison Lofties



Jennifer Thornton



Kaneasha Baker



Billie Thomas



Cynthia Thompson

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Each of us is absorbed in our own work, dedicated as we are to quick, efficient, accurate determinations. It takes a village to clear a case! It can be hard to see life at DDS from another's perspective.

I plan to make "A Day in the Life" a regular feature in The Advocate. I'd like to highlight a different DDS role in each issue: administrators, support staff, CDIU, medical consultants, etc. Please consider participating! It involves a 20 minute phone interview. After the piece is written but before it goes to print, you'll have an opportunity to review it and make changes. Be aware that some departments may require approval and a separate review before publication.

I also plan to make a collage of smiling NADE members' faces the cover of every issue. One of my favorite aspects of NADE membership is the chance to connect with members across the country. Please submit your photos. Goofy pictures, dress-up days, celebrations and triumphs are all big hits. Your photo could boost someone's morale! Submit one today!

To aspiring writers who've never contributed, please consider writing for The Advocate! It's a publication with a nationwide audience, and not just within the DDS community. Disability attorneys read The Advocate. Senior members in the Social Security Administration read The Advocate, too, and members of Congress! The Advocate is a great credit for your writing resume.

Even if you're not a writer, please consider submitting story ideas. We're gearing up for the next issue already! We welcome topics of interest to any member of NADE, including but not limited to medical topics, office process innovations, morale boosters and success stories.

The more of you we have in our publication, the better The Advocate will be. I want to hear from you!

*Korin Gary*

Communication Director

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**TO ORDER NADE MERCHANDISE, CONTACT:**

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All proceeds to benefit NADE/Non-Dues Revenue  
<http://www.nade.org/join-nade/nade-merchandise/>

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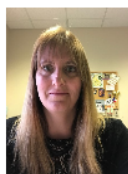
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