

# Ann Awny

STORY AND PHOTO  
BY AUTUMN SCHANIL



For nearly 20 years, Ann Awny worked in retail as an associate, store manager and everything in between. So, when she lost her job before the pandemic, she never thought it would lead her to becoming an Employment Specialist at New Hope Community in Loch Sheldrake, and that six years later she would be enjoying it more than ever.

"I assist people with developmental and physical disabilities in gaining employment," Ann said

with a smile, "and it's so much fun. I fell in love with everyone here, and I just love seeing them succeed. Their win is your win."

Ann does a little bit of everything. Sometimes she's at her desk with paperwork and on the phone, but most of the time she is out and about helping individuals get jobs, and that includes training.

There are a couple of main programs at New Hope, one of them

being the Employment Training Program, according to Ann, which has multiple sub programs within it. Discovery is an in-depth six month program in which the individual gets to try out multiple jobs to see what they like, or Discovery First - a shorter version - that helps out people who are already working but aren't necessarily satisfied with their job.

And then there are people who are completely new, who are taught the basic skills necessary to work towards gaining employment.

"We do it all," stated Ann. "Individuals are referred to me and

then we help them train. They're shown training videos, we physically train them, we bring them to the job sites and sit with them, sometimes we model how to do the job or walk them through it. It's 100 percent hands-on."

For individuals who find a job and are working, Ann will go and visit them to make sure everything is going well, that they're not being idle, and that they have the support they need. It means that Ann is sometimes at ShopRite, Home Depot, or the Casino. Other times she's on site inside the greenhouses watching individuals planting and farming, or at the horse barn modeling what needs to be done.

"The environment changes, the businesses change. I'm really lucky that I don't spend much time at my desk," noted Ann, "and a lot of what I do now in terms of training, I did a lot of when I was working in retail, so it all just kind of fell into place really easily for me. And I just love everyone I work with, they're all wonderful."

When Ann isn't at New Hope, she's still out and about, traveling with her son and her camera, photographing the beautiful landscapes that are pinned to the board behind her desk.



## CONGRATULATIONS Ann Awny!

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## YENI LAGRUTTA

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the seed of the woman I am today and the woman I aspire to be," she said. "Moving to the U.S. has given me so many opportunities to grow in ways I never imagined. I met my husband, which led me to settle in Sullivan County, where I have now lived for almost eight years, and gained another big family!"

The Housekeeping Manager's passion for traveling has also been incredibly eye-opening for her, as she noted that experiencing different cultures and observing with an open heart has shaped her perspective in ways she never expected - noting that "a keen eye for detail and the little things is what truly elevates the hospitality

experience."

Yeni offered her deep thanks to God, as well to her mother, who repeated the phrase to her "Si vas a hacer algo, hazlo bien, o mejor no lo hagas," which she said roughly translates to, "If you're going to do something, do it well, or don't do it at all."

Yeni also gave a shout out to her husband — "my #1 fan; thank you for always supporting me, even in my most ambitious (and sometimes delusional) moments," she said. "Lastly, I want to thank Bethel Woods Center for the Arts for believing in me and investing in my growth. I am truly grateful to work in such an amazing organization, where I've found both opportunity and a strong sense of community."