

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, September 20, 2023
Find us @naswil | #naswil

Contact: Joel L. Rubin, Executive Director
E-mail: jrubin.naswil@socialworkers.org
Cell Phone: 847.707.0549

HARM REDUCTION ADVOCATE AWARDED SOCIAL WORKER OF THE YEAR

PALATINE, IL— Each day social workers help break down barriers that prevent people from living more fulfilling, enriched lives. They work on the individual level, helping people overcome personal crises like food insecurity, lack of affordable housing, or limited access to good health care. They also advocate on a systems level to ensure laws and policies are adopted so everyone can access such services.

In continuation of this year's National Professional Social Work Month theme, "Social Work Breaks Barriers," the National Association of Social Workers, Illinois Chapter (NASW-IL) is honoring the work of some exceptional Illinois social workers and individuals whose work promotes social justice and social change with and on behalf of the people and clients they serve.

One such exemplary Illinois social worker being honored this year is 2023 NASW-Illinois Chapter Statewide Social Worker of the Year awardee Chelsea Laliberte Barnes. **Chelsea Laliberte Barnes (she/her), LSW**, is a powerful advocate and storyteller who promotes compassion and justice for individuals and families needing support. After her brother's death from an unintentional overdose in 2008, Chelsea and her parents launched Live4Lali, one of Illinois' foremost providers of comprehensive harm reduction and peer support services. Chelsea provides support to teens and adults in private practice, and she has helped write and pass more than 25 state and federal laws to advance core social work values, such as increasing access to mental health services and addressing poverty, housing, equality, care access, and criminal justice reform.

In support of their nomination of Chelsea, colleague Carina H. Santa Maria, Executive Director of Shelter, Inc., wrote: "One of Chelsea's remarkable achievements is the co-development of the Lake County Opioid Initiative, a coalition with over 300 members. This initiative has transformed access to care, instituted life-saving programs, and made substantial progress in diverting and deflecting individuals from the criminal justice system. Chelsea's deep understanding of trauma-informed care and her certification as a Clinical Trauma Professional have further fortified her ability to provide comprehensive support to individuals and families."

The NASW-Illinois Chapter is proud of the work of Chelsea Laliberte Barnes and others like her who continue to break barriers in their communities and beyond. Chelsea is one of four individuals being honored as this year's NASW-Illinois Chapter Statewide Awardees. To learn more about the other statewide awardees, please visit the NASW-Illinois Chapter website (www.naswil.org) or contact NASW-IL Executive Director Joel Rubin at jrubin.naswil@socialworkers.org.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world. The NASW-Illinois Chapter is one of the association's largest chapters and advocates for over 20,000 social workers in Illinois alone. NASW strives to advance social work careers, grow social work businesses, and protect the profession while seeking to also enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through advocacy.