

Thursday, October 13th, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Westchester Institute for Human Development's Mitchell Levitz to
serve on National Down Syndrome Research Consortium.**

Valhalla, NY (10/13/11) -- Westchester Institute for Human Development (WIHD), a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, applauds the selection of Mitchell Levitz by Eunice Kennedy Shiver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development/NIH, to serve as committee member of the Down Syndrome Consortium. As a self advocate with Down syndrome, Mr. Levitz has been instrumental in working on disability issues throughout the Hudson Valley and has been a speaker at conferences across the country.

Mr. Levitz has been an employee at WIHD since 2002. He teaches WIHD graduate students about self advocacy, coordinates a self advocacy group, and is a member of the WIHD self-determination research team. He has co-developed the WIHD curriculum for *My Health, My Choice, My Responsibility* and he conducts workshops on health and self-determination. On a national level he is an active committee member of the Association of University Centers on Disability (AUCD) and serves as a member of AUCD's Council on Community Advocacy (COCA) steering committee. He has contributed to numerous books and articles on disability issues and self-advocacy including co-authoring the book *Count Us In: Growing Up with Down Syndrome*.

The Down Syndrome Consortium at NIH has been formed to provide a forum for discussion regarding current research on Down syndrome and continued implementation of the NIH Research Plan on Down syndrome. Consortium members represent a range of stakeholders committed to research on Down syndrome, who will be encouraged to contribute opinions and views of research needs and opportunities from their unique perspectives.

Dr. Ansley Bacon, President and CEO of WIHD commented, "This invitation to serve on the Down Syndrome Consortium is the kind of opportunity that WIHD envisions for all people with disabilities. We are thrilled for Mitch and are confident that he will make a significant contribution."

About Westchester Institute for Human Development

The [Westchester Institute for Human Development](#) is one of 67 university-affiliated centers dedicated to creating better futures for people with disabilities, for vulnerable children, and for their families and caregivers. For 40 years, WIHD has pursued this mission through professional education, innovative services and supports, community training and technical assistance and research and information dissemination.

WIHD envisions a future in which people with disabilities and vulnerable children live healthy and productive lives as full members of society. The organization values the following key principles: Inclusion & Self-Determination; Safety, Permanency & Well-Being; Family & Community Partnership; Cultural Competency & Diversity; Leadership & Innovation.

WIHD supports children and adults with disabilities including autism spectrum disorders, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, neurological and cognitive disabilities, hearing and vision problems, and speech/language delays.

Dr. Ansley Bacon, President and CEO of WIHD, “Our efforts are guided by a vision in which people living with disabilities and vulnerable children fully participate in society, live healthy and productive lives, and have access to services and supports, emerging technologies, competent professionals and caring families.”

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