At the Utah Developmental Disabilities Council, we are preparing for our annual Advocacy Awards that we celebrate during our September Annual Council meeting on September 10. People are invited to submit nominations from several categories and it is always nice to reflect upon the many, many local heroes that work to support our Utah disability community.

Here are the 2013 Advocacy Award winners:

Self-Advocate of the Year – Anna Lilquist from Park City
Parent of the Year – Laura Anderson from North Salt Lake (and CAC member, too!)
Educator of the Year – Willis G. Jensen from Orangeville
Employer of the Year – Robert Sullivan
Legislator of the Year – Sen. Margaret Dayton
Media Representative of the Year – Big Budah
Adult Sibling of the Year – Eric Mitchell from Salt Lake

Congratulations to all these wonderful advocates!

In addition, we will be recognizing several important professionals who will be retiring from years of service to the citizens of Utah:

Palmer DePaulis – the Director of the Department of Human Services
Marie Christman – the Deputy Director of the Department of Human Services
Don Uchida – the Director of Rehabilitative Services

We owe a many thanks to these dedicated professionals.

On another note, the Council, with the support of adult siblings Jeff Sheen and Eric Mitchell, are starting the conversation to see about how we might best provide some supports for adult sibs. This is part of a greater national conversation that has started in many states and nationally as the Adult Sibling Leadership Network.

Utah will eventually be organizing UTABS – Utah Adult Brothers and Sisters. In the meantime, if you know or are an adult sibling, drop me a line or give me a call as we will shortly be starting a Facebook page and gathering contact information to begin connections.

Claire Mantonya
clairemantony@utah.gov 801-533-3965