**Stony Brook Childcare**

I had the pleasure of meeting Josefina Gallardo, Director of Stony Brook Childcare Services in 2022 at a Job Fair in Riverhead. We discussed their staffing needs and ACCES-VR services to help people with disabilities obtain employment in collaboration with vendor agencies. In 2023 we ACCES was assisting a young woman who had a desire to work with children but had no experience. Josefina and her co-Director Jill Stafford interviewed Mandy and agreed to have her participate in a Work Try Out internship for 3 months. Mandy worked at the center for 3 months coached by ACLD and her wages were reimbursed by ACCES-VR. She enjoyed the work greatly and was hired as a permanent employee. Shortly after they hired another applicant introduced by ACLD and Rebecca has proven to be a highly valued employee. During the past year the center took on a college student in a Work Try Out, hired additional classroom support staff and a receptionist after another internship. Over the past year Josefina and Jill have hired 4 permanent employees who receive coaching services from ACLD. Stonybrook Childcare Center staff have proven to be exemplary advocates for these employees. They have been supportive and patient with the onboarding and intensive support all these employees required. All the staff at the center act as natural supports to all their employees with disabilities. Josefina, Jill, and their team have accommodated various schedules and have highlighted each person's abilities and strengths for them to succeed. It is my pleasure and honor to present Josefina Gallardo of Stony Brook Childcare Services with our 2024 Advocate of the Year award!