

## **Advocate of the Year**

The Advocate of the Year is an individual who has affected meaningful change for their community through advocacy for mental health and wellbeing. Nominees may excel in:

- Using lived experience and storytelling to raise awareness and drive change, whether within their local community or across systems
- Wielding their passion to champion the human rights of those who identify with the mental health community
- Building partnerships to advance the wellbeing of marginalized and underserved communities

### Advocate of the Year Nominee Description:

Madeline Roberts is the Tenant Advocate at the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity. She manages a statewide helpline through the Vermont Tenants Program, responding to dozens of housing-related calls and emails daily from people in need of support regarding their rental housing situations. Many clients call when they are in crisis, such as having serious health and safety issues in their apartments, conflicts with their housing providers, or fear of losing their homes. Madeline provides calm and compassionate support for those who feel helpless and marginalized as she responds with timely referrals and information about their rights and responsibilities.

Madeline has worked at CVOEO for 25-years and is deeply knowledgeable of housing resources in our Vermont communities. She helps people figure out their next steps when seeking new rental housing or facing evictions, reviews leases and helps determine if any stipulations might be unlawful, and helps people self-advocate for maintenance of repairs or habitability issues. She empowers clients daily by informing them of Vermont landlord/tenant laws and provides support to thousands of people each year as she helps them find resolutions to the daunting housing issues they are experiencing.

Madeline also supports many people during her off-work time through her social media platforms and answers housing related questions for people in need. Access to sustainable housing is crucial to a person's well-being and Madeline's efforts with the Vermont Tenants Helpline and beyond have made a monumental impact in giving people access to necessary information to help them overcome barriers and maintain their housing and determine their best housing options. Her expertise is valued throughout the State and within our organization.