

Senate Resolution No. 208

BY: Senator DEFRANCISCO

COMMENDING Tom McKeown upon his retirement after 14 years of distinguished service to ARISE Child and Family Services in Syracuse, New York

WHEREAS, Individuals who give of their time and energies and serve the best interests of their communities are an asset beyond remuneration and deserve to be recognized by the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and honor those significant milestones in the distinguished careers of those esteemed individuals who have been committed to the pursuit of excellence and who bring great pride to the citizens of our State; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is proud to commend Tom McKeown upon his retirement after 14 years of distinguished service to ARISE Child and Family Services in Syracuse, New York; and

WHEREAS, Viewed by his friends, family, and co-workers as a phenomenal individual, Tom McKeown has enriched the lives of many others in the Central New York community as a dignified leader who treats every person who connects with ARISE with the utmost respect; and

WHEREAS, As a long-time resident of the Northside of Syracuse, Tom McKeown has always felt a strong connection to his community, motivating him to become an active and vital force in improving Central New York; and

WHEREAS, ARISE is a non-profit, community-based organization founded in 1979, that works to ensure that everyone, regardless of disability, has the power to make life choices to achieve their dreams; since their inception, they have provided opportunities to people with disabilities to allow them to live freely and independently in the community; and

WHEREAS, On July 29, 2002, Tom McKeown joined ARISE as the organization's Executive Director; in this capacity, Tom McKeown has furthered the organization's mission to work with people of all abilities and promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities in a fair and just community; he has also led ARISE through a period of tremendous growth with regard to the number of programs offered as well as the organization's region of service; and

WHEREAS, Initially, ARISE covered the two counties of Oswego and Onondaga, but under the leadership of Tom McKeown, they eventually expanded to offer services in Madison County and then in Cayuga and Seneca Counties; ARISE currently serves more than 7,000 people with 50 different programs in five separate counties; and

WHEREAS, Tom McKeown was also instrumental in expanding ARISE at the Farm, an inclusive recreation center located on a 77-acre working horse

farm in Chittenango, which provides various activities from therapeutic horseback riding to summer camps and a high ropes course; and

WHEREAS, When Tom McKeown first took charge as Executive Director, ARISE was a small organization which employed 120 people with a small budget; today, ARISE employs approximately 700 people of all abilities and has quadrupled their annual budget; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the course of his career as ARISE's Executive Director, Tom McKeown has demonstrated a strong and unwavering commitment to the Independent Living Philosophy, and has remained committed, passionate and genuine in working to help improve the lives of others within his community; and

WHEREAS, In addition, Tom McKeown has also actively worked throughout the years with government officials, on all levels, to advocate on behalf of the organization; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that those dedicated professionals, who unselfishly devote their lives to the health and well-being of a society, are worthy of the praise of the State of New York for their commitment and contributions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend Tom McKeown upon the occasion of his retirement after 14 years of distinguished service to ARISE Child and Family Services in Syracuse, New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be hereby transmitted to Tom McKeown.