Support those who care for adults with disabilities

As I reflect upon the meaning of Memorial Day, I think about my father, who was a Naval Officer during WWII, and my father-in-law, who was a Marine officer during WWII, and the Korean conflict. Both men helped raise a child with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Medical advances, educational opportunities, and social programs have vastly improved for youngsters with I/DD since the 1940s, when their children were born. I wonder how they would feel now if they witnessed the plight of adults with I/DD in Delaware.

For more than a decade, services for adults with I/DD have been underfunded, to the point of crisis. On May 15th, individuals with I/DD, family members, advocates, some supportive legislators, as well as direct support professionals attended a rally in front of Legislative Hall. They were there to remind legislators, who voted unanimously for the Michael McNesby Full-Funding of I/DD Services Act last year, of the promise made to Delaware citizens who are challenged by I/DD.

Now the promise must be kept to fully fund the I/DD care system, in memory of Michael McNesby, a remarkable Delawarean who had Down Syndrome. He was beloved by his family, his community, and those who supported him at work and play: direct support professionals.

Without the needed funding, these dedicated care-givers will disappear. They will be forced to leave a profession they love because they can’t support their families.

The Joint Finance Committee needs to do the right thing this week: Provide the amount requested for I/DD adult services for 2020, and keep the McNesby promise.

—Lisa Elias, Townsend