



Amalia Duarte
Public Relations Director
ECLC of NJ
Tel: 973-635-1705 X26
Cell: (973-902-8390)
E-mail: aduarte@eclcofnj.org

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ECLC of N.J. Honors Founding Board Member Bebe Antell of West Orange

Antell was an advocate and pioneer in the days when special needs didn't have a name

CHATHAM, NJ – Founding ECLC of New Jersey Board Member Bebe Antell of West Orange was honored on May 26 for decades of advocacy on behalf of children and adults with special needs.

A perpetual scholarship in Antell's name was announced that begins with the current class of graduating students from ECLC's special needs school in Chatham. In addition to operating schools in Chatham and Ho-Ho-Kus, ECLC provides job opportunities and programs to special need adults.

Antell was an advocate and pioneer in the days when special needs didn't have a name. She was thrust into this world because of her son, Donald. "Bebe is the reason that ECLC 'is'," said Executive Director, Bruce Litinger. "For many, many years, Bebe and a group of devoted parents pioneered what we at ECLC take for granted today."

A newsletter penned by Antell, called Perceptions, offered advice and information to parents who were desperate for support, recalled ECLC Board Member, Jane Fischer, who also has a special needs child.

Fischer, said, "Bebe was a beacon to me. She worked tirelessly to make the seed of an idea for a special education school into a respected model for the state. We fought the good fight together and had so many highs and lows."

Board member Helene Jaffe described how Antell planted the seeds for such programs as SKIL (Seeking Knowledge for Independent Living) in which students at ECLC learn practical work skills and habits in the school and then move out into the community to "sample" jobs, from child care and retail to food service.

She also was instrumental in the founding of a program called P.R.I.D.E. for adults with special needs to enhance their independence and daily living skills. "Bebe still brings fresh ideas to the table," said Litinger. "We can thank Bebe for making ECLC like a Harvard of special education."

About ECLC

ECLC is a nonprofit that provides more than 600 children and adults with severe developmental disabilities across the state education and services. Founded in 1970, ECLC has grown from a small, early-intervention program into a comprehensive network of non-profit agencies serving special-needs children and adults throughout central and northern New Jersey. These students and adult clients have severe learning and/or language disabilities, Down syndrome, autism or multiple disabilities.

At schools in Ho-Ho-Kus and Chatham, ECLC educates more than 300 students, ages 5-21. For its graduates and other adult clients, ECLC provides job placements and transition services after high school through Community Personnel Services (CPS) and vocational skills and independent living skills training in its P.R.I.D.E. day/evening programs.

Learn more about ECLC at <http://www.eclcofnj.org>.