



New Jersey Speech-Language-Hearing Association

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NJSHA Announces its 2006 Award Winners For Outstanding Achievement in Speech-Language-Hearing

2006 Program of the Year—Ryerson Learning Center in Ryerson School, Wayne Public Schools

The Ryerson Learning Center, established in 1980 in the Ryerson Elementary School in Wayne, educates special-needs children ages 3 through 12. Currently it serves 38 children in preschool handicapped and multiply-disabled classes. Students have autism, seizure disorders, cerebral palsy, various syndromes and other severe communication disorders. Many families move to Wayne so their children can attend the center's program, which features special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, a full-time nurse and support staff. Each child is everyone's child, regardless of caseload assignments and communication is the keystone of the center's program. All classes use augmentative technology, with low-tech picture boards, high-tech dynamic communication devices and switch-accessed computers. Being located in a regular education environment, the center's children are able to interact with their typically developing peers daily during lunch and on the playground. Some of the center's children even receive instruction in regular education classrooms.

2006 Distinguished Service Award—Scottish Rite Masons of New Jersey

In 1994, the Scottish Rite Masons established Centers for Dyslexic Children. The Centers provide children with dyslexia one-to-one tutoring to help them learn to read and write more effectively. There are six Centers throughout New Jersey (Burlington, Hasbrouck Heights, Newark, Northfield, Scotch Plains and Tenafly) and services are provided free of charge. These centers staff 297 teachers, each of whom is responsible for two students for the year. All teachers also work with 15 additional children in their home schools. In turn, these teachers receive free training from Fairleigh Dickinson University for which they become certified in the Orton Gillingham Approach to reading. The entire program is supported financially and with volunteer Masons throughout the state. To date, the centers have helped over 1300 children.

2006 Distinguished Professional Service Award – Lester F. Aungst, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Les Aungst's 40-year career in speech-language pathology includes full-time professorships at West Chester University, Temple University and Bowling Green State University, as well as adjunct positions at Rowan, Rutgers, and Kean Universities. In addition, Les worked in several public school districts and in a variety of medical settings. He has conducted several research projects, published numerous articles in professional journals and presented at conferences across the country. Les also has been the recipient of 11 ACE awards from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Les is currently an independent contractor and consultant, and volunteers with organizations such as NJSHA, where he offers advice on education issues and early literacy. He has worked on NJSHA testimonies to the New Jersey Office of Special Education Programs and has served as a member of several working and advisory committees on both the state and national levels.

2006 Distinguished Achievement Award—Darian Dominguez

Darian Dominguez is a 10 ½ -year-old boy from Paterson Public School #2 whose achievements have far exceeded the expectations of his educational program. Despite a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder with accompanying dyspraxia and significant auditory processing and sensory integration deficits, Darian's extraordinary efforts within his academic and therapeutic programs have helped him overcome barriers to participating in the regular education program. Darian has moved from full-time placement in a Severe Language Learning Disabilities self-contained class to a mainstreamed program in which he now joins his grade-level general-education classmates for math, science, music, art, physical education and health. Today, Darian works well in small groups, follows large group lessons and has good relationships with peers and staff members. He is able to express himself clearly, has developed a unique sense of humor, shares clever insights and observations, is developing critical thinking skills and is socializing well with others.

2006 Distinguished Clinical Service Award – Constance N. Weiler, M.S., CCC-SLP

The highest quality of service and a forthright relationship with each client family are the hallmarks of therapy programs provided by Constance Weiler. She maintains close and frequent communication with parents of her child clients, believing that parents must understand their children's speech-language disorders and the rationale for intervention plans so their children are successful. Inviting parents into the therapy room, Constance develops therapy plans that are innovative and individualized. Constance is recognized as an expert by speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists and other medical specialists. In 1979, Constance helped develop and implement an innovative, six-week, inner-city speech-language therapy program for the Chicago Easter Seal Society that also included occupational and physical therapy, and social work services. Constance has presented at various state conferences and has held adjunct faculty positions at Rider University, Mercer County Community College, the New School University—Actors' Studio Drama School (NY), and Westminster Theological Seminary (PA). She also provides in-service training at schools, hospitals, nursing homes and private practices. She is the recipient of three ASHA ACE awards and remains active in NJSHA.

2006 Honors of the Association—Donna Spillman-Kennedy, M.S., CCC-SLP

Donna Spillman-Kennedy is a skilled speech-language pathologist who has devoted her career to working with severely impaired and multi-handicapped students at the Lakeview School of the Cerebral Palsy Association of Middlesex County in Edison, where she served as the facility's Director of Speech-Language Pathology. For over 10 years, Donna served as NJSHA's Continuing Education Chair organizing, compiling and submitting CEU accreditations in order to make sure that NJSHA's continuing education programs met the professional standards established by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

2006 Volunteer of the Year—Ruth R. Blackman, MA, CCC-SLP

For the last seven years, Ruth Blackman single-handedly has served as NJSHA's School Affairs Committee (SAC) Chair—South. She fields questions from speech-language specialists almost daily, enhances networking among her southern New Jersey colleagues, keeps abreast of current school-based issues by actively participating in New Jersey Association of Speech-Language Specialists (an NJEA affiliate) and maintaining membership in ASHA's special interest divisions, School-Based Issues and Language Disorders. Ruth has attended and volunteered at NJSHA's Conventions for 20 years. Since 1981, she has been employed as a speech-language specialist in NJ public schools, private practice, hospitals, rehabilitation centers and nursing homes. She has worked with patients presenting with dysphagia and a variety of neurogenic disorders and is fond of working with stroke and pediatric language disorders.