

MADISON CIVICS CLUB  
NOVEMBER 7, 2009  
Introduction of Honored Guests:  
SUE ALBERT

The more information I gathered about Sue Albert, the more convinced I became that this honor was overdue! 39 years ago Sue was creating innovative programs for EC children that were unheard of across the country. So let me tell you about Sue.

It was 1970 when Sue and her husband, Pete Albert, returned from a two-year Peace Corps experience in Guyana. She was hired as the Director of Kiddie Kamp, an agency funded by The Capital Times Newspaper and the Madison Association for Retarded Citizens. She says, "five wonderful years I worked with special needs children from birth-to-nine-years, with up to 60 children at a time, six hours a day, and year-round services!"

The public schools were not mandated to serve children with disabilities until 1975, so the parents drove their children to Kamp everyday. Sue recalls the immense appreciation of the parents for the financial support of the Cap Times that provided a strong education program for their children, when public schools were not meeting their needs. Professionals who visited this unique program called it "a 'State of the Art' program that supported families and their children in school and home."

It must have been a clear and obvious decision for MMSD to hire Sue Albert in 1975! They had found a seasoned professional, yet ONLY in her late 20s, who entered the district with her feet running!

As the EC Program Support Teacher, Sue pioneered public school and community partnerships at the preschool level. She reports having had "wonderful experiences working with Head Start, community childcare centers, and programs such as The Rainbow Project to advocate and assist parents to obtain services for their children with special needs."

In addition to community partnerships, Sue brought many gifts to the teachers. She supported them within the early childhood program:

- \* to develop and use a standard assessment battery;
- \* to be involved in on-going creative and thought-provoking learning opportunities; and
- \* to have the opportunity to network with each other as peers, with knowledge to share within their professional community.

Meetings, often led by Sue, encouraged relationships to grow in an environment of trust and mutual support between parents, community providers and the district. These relationships enhanced efficient, meaningful dialogues about preschoolers at points of transition along the young child's early learning experiences from the birth-to-three program, to early childhood services, and on to kindergarten.

Sue consistently operated from a set of values and beliefs about young children and families,

which she modeled and instilled in people working with her.

These values included the following:

- \* the whole child must be considered (not just the disability),
- \* programming for young children must also consider the needs of families,
- \* it is the responsibility of people providing services to children and their families to develop a plan that is respectful and considerate of these factors;
- \* parents of children with disabilities deserve the same choices that parents of non-disabled children receive, and
- \* it is the responsibility of the staff to bring services to the child's natural environment and in a setting that is typical for their peers.

Her staff report, “many times she stretched our notions of what was possible,” helping us to grow and be proud of our profession.

Her calm and informed leadership provided the stability, continuity and foundation for an early childhood program that was able to grow with the ever-changing challenges and joys of the students and families it supported. Sue is credited as the “person who really built the MMSD EC program into a model program” and the path she forged is still strong today.

Civics Club Thanks you, SUE ALBERT, for your personal and profession commitment to helping special needs children DEFY THE ODDS as they reach for SUCCESS!

#### GEORGE WHITELY

The name GEORGE WHITELY came to my attention as I was seeking to connect with community agencies that are committed to serving special needs children. The staff from SOWI (Special Olympics of Wisconsin) enthusiastically embraced George, a veteran volunteer of 17 years. While serving on the Marketing and Development Committee of Special Olympics, his firm developed the Polar Plunge, SOWI's largest fundraiser; the polar bear logo; and ‘freezin for a reason’ tagline--both now familiar branding all over the country in support of Special Olympics.

George Whitely is President & CEO of Stephan & Brady, a leading Madison-based advertising and Public Relations agency. Back in 1989, George and his firm had just completed a pro-bono pledge drive communications program for United Way of Dane County. That success led to a request for George's firm to help Special Olympics Wisconsin, an organization that provides ongoing sports training and competition for individuals with cognitive disabilities. Special Olympics had just gone through a difficult leadership change and was looking for help in more effectively getting its message out to people throughout Wisconsin. George agreed, and the agency developed a variety of materials that featured Special Olympics athletes. While developing these materials, George had the opportunity to interact with the athletes, and witness first hand the difference the organization made in their lives. He was hooked for life.

While serving on the board for the past 17 years, George has had the opportunity to attend numerous Special Olympics activities. From local competitions, to statewide games, to the World Games in Raleigh, North Carolina and Anchorage, Alaska. But his favorite times have always been interacting with the athletes. And in witnessing the incredible impact Special Olympics has on their lives and families.

George's favorite example of this positive impact involves a Special Olympics athlete from Milwaukee, Cindy Bentley. George first met Cindy at a state competition back in 1993. Cindy proved to be a good athlete. She excelled at the Wisconsin Summer Games, and soon became a member of Special Olympics Team USA, competing in the World Games several times. Over the years, he watched her grow and develop beyond the field of competition. Cindy became one of Special Olympics' first athletes to serve on its board of directors. But she didn't stop there. Through Special Olympics athlete leadership program, Cindy also became an athlete ambassador, speaking to large groups not just throughout the US, but the world. By the time Cindy's board term had ended, she had met several presidents and spoken at events in over 10 countries. Not bad for an individual who, as a fetal alcohol syndrome baby, was given little chance for survival. She definitely DEFIED THE ODDS.

Civics Club Thanks you, George Whitely, for your personal and profession commitment to helping young people DEFY THE ODDS as they reach for SUCCESS!