

NCJW Dallas Member Syl Benenson To Receive Enduring Pioneer Award

The National Council of Jewish Women, Greater Dallas Section (NCJW) is pleased to announce that past president and long-time volunteer Syl Benenson has been chosen by NCJW, Inc. as the recipient of the Enduring Pioneer Award to be presented at the National Convention in Chicago in March. This award honors an individual NCJW member who has been instrumental, in two or more identifiable ways, in moving her section toward accomplishing NCJW's mission in a pioneering way, over a period of 10 or more years.

This is the highest award given to an individual member by National and is only given to one recipient, nation-wide, each year. No one from Dallas has ever received this esteemed recognition, and Syl is certainly deserving of the honor. Syl has been a member of the Dallas section for over 40 years, but her contributions to NCJW and the Dallas community reflect a commitment far in excess of that. She serves as a role model to our members and an example of what volunteerism and advocacy should be.

On behalf of the Greater Dallas Section of NCJW, Syl approached the Dallas Independent School District in 1979 about the possibility of initiating the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI) program in the district. HIPPI is a parent involvement, school readiness program that helps parents prepare their three, four, and five year old children for success in school and beyond. HIPPI helps parents empower themselves as their children's first teacher by giving them the tools, skills, and confidence they need to work with their children in the home. The program was developed by NCJW at their research institute in Israel in 1969. After 9 years of courting DISD, Syl was successful in launching the program in 1988. She has continued to work tirelessly for the past 20 years, expanding the program to the Grand Prairie, Irving, and Richardson school districts, providing service to more than 1600 families annually.

Among Syl's many achievements:

- ◆ Served as part of the group who lobbied for and got an additional \$700 MILLION in federal matching aid for Medicaid in Texas
- ◆ Driving force behind our HIPPI program, and succeeded in getting the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Service to help fund four sites for six years in Houston, San Antonio, and Austin – providing a program serving 3 year olds.
- ◆ Been active in the reproductive rights battle in Dallas and throughout the state for many years
- ◆ One of the original members of the Women's Issues Network, advocating for issues affecting women
- ◆ Served as President of OWL, the Older Women's League, advocating for older women's issues
- ◆ Helped start the first neighborhood clinics for indigent health care
- ◆ Helped found Foster Child Advocate Services (now Dallas CASA – Court Appointed Special Advocates) – being one of only three site recipients of this program from National

- ◆ Was a moving force behind the creation of the Family Outreach program that strengthens families by empowering families to break the intergenerational cycle of child abuse and neglect.

In celebration of the 20th Anniversary of HIPPIY in Texas, Syl will be recognized by the Texas Parent Child Initiative at a reception on February 21 6:30-8:00 at the Latino Cultural Center.

Syl is also being recognized at the Dallas YWCA's 100 Women/100 Years Centennial Awards Gala on May 3. This award is given to women who have made a meaningful and lasting contribution to Dallas in the last 100 years.

We wonder where Syl conjures up the extra hours and days to do all she does – and how she finds time to identify and draw new young members into her programs – serving as mentor, coach, and friend to all. Syl has announced that as a final act of “giving” she has willed her body to the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School. We are sure they will find a large and very special heart.

National Council of Jewish Women is a volunteer organization that, for over a century, has been at the forefront of social change – championing the needs of women, children, and families. NCJW has over 3000 members across Texas, including 1200 plus members in the Greater Dallas area, and approximately 100,000 members and supporters nationwide.

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