

# **2014 Champions for Equality and Justice**

*presented by*

**Disability Rights North Carolina**



**November 7, 2014**

**Durham, NC**

# 2014 Awards Sponsors

## **Platinum Champions**

Cadgewith Farms Ltd.  
Vicki Smith

## **Gold Champions**

Kathy Boyd  
Developmental Associates ( Heather Lee  
and Steve Straus)  
Easter Seals UCP NC & Virginia  
Garriss Hardy & Associates

## **Silver Champions**

Campbell University Law School  
Chris Griffin  
Henson & Fuerst  
Michael Murray  
Janna Shisler

## **Bronze Champions**

Ken Butler  
Sally Cameron  
William Donohue  
April Giancola  
Greater Triangle Rep Payee Services, Inc.  
Ginny Hilton  
Ashley Lindsay  
Roger Manus  
Greg McGrew

## **A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR**

Welcome to our fourth annual reception to celebrate this year's recipients of the Champions for Equality and Justice Award.

As the State's protection and advocacy system, Disability Rights NC belongs to the citizens of the State who were born with or have acquired a disability. Our obligations are to all such people throughout their lives. Our advocacy work covers every aspect of life and ensures that people with disabilities have the ability to live free from harm in the communities of their choice.



Since first opening its doors on July 1, 2007, Disability Rights NC has celebrated many successes in protecting the independence and rights of people with disabilities living in North Carolina. But to effect systems change, we must have the help of passionate, committed advocates.

Each year, we recognize and honor the contribution of advocates who have made outstanding efforts to increase the awareness of disability rights issues in North Carolina, to work towards the removal of both physical and attitudinal barriers for people with disabilities, to create a more inclusive community, and to speak for and represent those who cannot represent themselves.

It takes a very special person to sustain a lifetime of tireless advocacy for people with disabilities. And we knew one of those special people – Adele Foschia. It is our honor to create a new award in Adele's name to carry forth her legacy of passionate advocacy for people with all types of disabilities.

We can recognize only a few people each year, but you are all Champions for Equality and Justice!

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Vicki Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vicki Smith

## LINDA McDONOUGH

Linda McDonough is a little bit like Goldilocks. She is the mother of two daughters, neither of whom fit well into public schools. So she founded a school for her children and other students who don't fit the mold. The school is aptly named Just Right Academy. Opened five years ago, Just Right Academy is a nonprofit, private elementary and secondary learning center focused on instruction for children who need structure and positive reinforcement, movement, and reduced stress. It has been a success and continues to grow, especially supporting children on the autism spectrum.



After graduating from Western Carolina University in 1977 with a bachelor's degree in English and minors in Reading and Education, Linda taught in both public and private schools. For many years, she worked as a private tutor to help children with dyslexia learn to read and write. From 1992 to 2008, she served as the Director of Christian Education at the Church of the Holy Family, where she founded the Augustine Project, a program that provides trained tutors to low-income children with reading difficulties. She continues to serve as a tutor, trainer, and board member. Linda was recognized for her work on the Augustine Project by the NC Chapter of the International Dyslexia Association with the June Lyday Orton Award for service to people with dyslexia.

Linda adopted a daughter with severe mental illness and developmental disabilities. She freely shares her experiences advocating for educational placement and mental health care through a blog called "A Good Story Later." The blog has created more awareness and understanding among professionals, peers, legislators, teachers, and the community.

Linda was nominated for the Champions for Equality and Justice Award by Laura Branan who said she is inspired by Linda's advocacy for North Carolinians with special needs and mental illness. When the General Assembly threatened to close The Wright School, a private school for children aged 6-12 with behavioral and emotional disorders, Linda used social media to organize citizens of NC to write and call their state legislators to ask them to continue to fund The Wright School. Linda's

advocacy leadership inspired many people to support and advocate for The Wright School community.

Linda improved awareness by speaking at the annual mental health state legislative breakfast in Chapel Hill and testifying before the Medicaid Reform Advisory Committee. She participated in the non-violent Moral Monday protests in Raleigh and rallied others to join her.

Linda has not only led advocacy efforts for people with disabilities but has inspired others to become advocates as well.

## **BETTY PAESLER, RN, MSN**

Known as “Nurse Betty” to the staff of Disability Rights NC, Betty Paesler is tiny in stature, but big on passion.

She retired from Central Regional Hospital as Director of Nursing in 2009, after serving patients there and at Dorothea Dix Hospital for nearly 30 years. Betty was a pioneer in advocating for mentally ill patients and their families by empowering and educating both consumers and mental health providers regarding hope and confidence within the recovery model. She initiated and directed the first treatment mall in the nation that successfully integrated forensic patients with the civil population. She shared her experience as a co-author for “Integrating Forensically and Civilly Committed Adult Inpatients in a Treatment Mall at a State Hospital,” an article published in the journal *Psychiatric Services* in 2009. In addition, she created and implemented a protocol for mental health directives to afford patients the opportunity to choose treatments in advance of a major psychiatric regression.

Patient care and administration was not Betty’s only responsibility. She also educated staff members on advances in clinical practice and led QI initiatives. Betty directly supervised the nursing care in the Forensic Division at Dix (consisting of 90 beds; pretrial, minimum, medium and maximum security) from 2002-2009.



With all this expertise, it should not be surprising that Betty currently serves as a nurse surveyor for the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), traveling to hospitals across the United States to determine whether they are in compliance with federal regulations.

Her graduate degree is in Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing with a focus on underserved and difficult to serve populations, such as patients living in geographic areas that are difficult to reach, underserved patients not responsive to therapy, and people with chronic mental health issues. She was involved in a research project that studied the barriers to the implementation of a childhood immunization program aimed at low income families. Betty has completed 18 semester hours of doctoral work focusing on education and health care.

Betty began volunteering with Disability Rights NC after her retirement and has given hundreds of hours of her time to help us serve our clients better. Her expertise treating people with severe mental illness makes her an invaluable resource for our investigations and monitoring work. Along with staff, she monitors conditions at the mental health hospital at Central Prison as well as Unit One, the disciplinary unit where prisoners are locked down 23/7. Betty helps Disability Rights NC staff members understand the nuances of issues such as chemical restraint and how to respond to a person who is experiencing delusions or hallucinations. Her expertise as a nurse in general is invaluable because she can explain complex medical issues.

In addition to helping us read and understand the mental health and medical records of the people we serve, Betty reviews death reports and autopsies to help us weed through the highly technical medical language. She has the ability to either reinforce our concerns or alleviate them, allowing us to focus our limited resources where they are most needed.

Betty is a strong advocate for people with mental illness. She never compromises on the proper response for the care and treatment of people with mental illness. She pushes us to confront abusive treatment and for that we are a more effective protection and advocacy agency. At the heart of all of her gentle, passionate guidance is a deep and caring respect for the people we serve. Betty has a heart for people with disabilities. Betty recognizes and relates to the humanity of all people. She demonstrates and personifies the values of Disability Rights NC.

Betty's selfless contributions to Disability Rights NC help ensure safer, more humane and effective treatment for the people we serve. She is formidable when she marries her heart with her considerable expertise and creative mind.

## **Adele Foschia Award for Lifetime Cross-Disability Advocacy**

Adele helped Disability Rights NC become the results-driven organization it is today. Even after she turned the leadership reins over to Vicki Smith, she never wavered as an enthusiastic supporter of the organization.

For that reason and in recognition of the fact that Adele spent her entire professional life serving people with all types of disabilities, Disability Rights NC created a new award in her name to recognize individuals who have dedicated their life to advocating for people with all types of disabilities. This award will be given from time-to-time to deserving individuals.

## **REMEMBERING ADELE FOSCHIA**

North Carolina's disability community lost a tenacious advocate on November 9, 2013 when Adele Foschia died unexpectedly. Adele's commitment to people with disabilities spanned her entire professional life. She made a tremendous difference everywhere she worked.

Adele's career with Easter Seals spanned over 40 years. She started as a special needs teacher, and her unique leadership capability led her to many management positions, including terms as President and CEO of Easter Seals affiliates in Washington, DC, Texas, and North Carolina. She was a loved and respected mentor to hundreds of employees and colleagues. In 1980, Adele received the Myrtle M. and Tom B. Medders Award from Easter Seals National, a prestigious award given to an outstanding CEO.



## **Disability Rights NC**

### **Board of Directors**

**Kathy Boyd - *Chair***  
Wake Forest

**Janna Shisler - *Chair-Elect***  
Chapel Hill

**Cheryl Mulloy-Villemagne -  
*Treasurer***  
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**D. Jones - *Secretary***  
Greenville

**Pat McGinnis - *PAIMI  
Advisory Council Chair***  
Marion

**Rusty Bradstock**  
Greensboro

**William Donohue**  
Winston-Salem

**Lourdes Fernandez**  
Raleigh

**D. Jones**  
Greenville

**Kimberly Taylor**  
Statesville

**Charles Walker**  
Raleigh

**Deborah Whitfield**  
Charlotte

During her 20-year tenure with Easter Seals in Washington, DC, Adele served on the first Head Start Advisory Board and started the city's first early intervention and day care program for disabled infants and toddlers. She was a founding member of the board of directors of the city's first protection and advocacy system. When Adele left Washington, the Mayor proclaimed an official "Adele Foschia Day" in recognition of her accomplishments for the children of that city.

Although Adele retired from Easter Seals in 2003, she continued to be a valuable resource for the disability community in North Carolina. She provided leadership stability to disability agencies in transition, including service as the Interim Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness—NC (NAMI) on two separate occasions. A former NAMI board member recalled that Adele had a knack of knowing what needed to be done immediately and what could wait.

Adele was part of a core group of advocates who lobbied for the removal of the federally mandated P&A system from North Carolina state government. After years of discussion, Governor Easley initiated the steps necessary to decommission the Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities (GACPD) and move by redesignation the P&A responsibilities to Carolina Legal Assistance (CLA).

CLA had a long history of providing legally-based services to people with mental disabilities. As the new P&A, CLA had to grow quickly to carry out its federal responsibilities. The Board of Directors turned to Adele for leadership

Nominations for the  
2015 Champions for  
Equality and Justice  
Awards will open in  
late March 2015.

Who will you  
nominate next year?

## **Previous Champions Award Recipients**

**2008**

The Honorable William Creech  
Lockhart Follin-Mace  
Jo Anne Jeffries  
Robert Reilly - *In Memory*

**2009**

Marian Hartman  
Greg McGrew  
NC IOLTA

**2010**

*(no award given)*

**2011**

Julia Bick - *In Memory*  
Michael Maybee  
Dr. Charles Walker

**2012**

Jeremy Donohue  
Ellen Russell  
Stephen Webster

**2013**

Robert Bullock - *In Memory*  
Leanna George  
Sally and David Sloop

in building the organization's capacity.

As the Interim Executive Director, Adele engineered the redesign of CLA. She recruited key staff to provide a strong management team to oversee the organization's growth. She recruited new Board members from across the state. She also led discussions about the new organization's vision, mission and brand. Adele laid the solid foundation needed to build a strong organization renamed Disability Rights NC with the tag line "Champions for Equality and Justice."

The list of awards Adele received and praise for her work and zest for life goes on and on. She improved the lives of countless people with disabilities. And she inspired many disability rights advocates to work just a little bit harder and be just a little bit better.

We extend our deep gratitude to Adele's husband of 54 years, John, and her children, John Foschia III and Mary Beth Townley, for sharing her with us and allowing her to touch our lives as only she could.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Second Annual  
Disability Advocacy Conference**

**Tuesday, April 14, 2015**

**8:30 am - 4:30 pm**

**The Friday Center  
Chapel Hill, NC**



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*Its team of attorneys, advocates, paralegals, and support staff provide advocacy and legal services at no charge for people with disabilities across North Carolina. Disability Rights North Carolina is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. All donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.*