

2011-J203

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 34th Anniversary Sound & Light Gala of the Helen Keller Services for the Blind to be held on Thursday, September 23, 2010

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize that the quality and character of life in the communities across New York State are reflective of the concerned and dedicated efforts of those organizations and individuals who would devote themselves to the welfare of the community and its citizenry; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 34th Anniversary Sound & Light Gala of the Helen Keller Services for the Blind to be held at Stage 6 at Steiner Studios, Brooklyn Navy Yard, on Thursday, September 23, 2010; and

WHEREAS, At this year's Gala, Helen Keller Services for the Blind will pay special tribute to four exceptional women who have made a difference in the lives of many; they are: Jill Arkwright Harvey, Analytic Asset Management; Abigail Breslin, Actress; Michelle Charlesworth, WABC-TV, Channel 7; and Kelly Watson, KPMG; and

WHEREAS, The history of this illustrious organization begins on November 2, 1883, when 17-year-old Eben Porter Morford was caught in a tragedy that resulted in him becoming completely blind; undeterred, he went on to successfully train at The New York Institute for the Education of the Blind; and

WHEREAS, Upon the completion of his studies, Eben Porter Morford realized that there were almost no employment opportunities for blind people; he did not understand as he reasoned that blindness was physical; vision was mental and spiritual; blindness need not destroy patience, fortitude, ingenuity, courage and the will to win; and

WHEREAS, Holding true to these beliefs, in 1886, Eben Porter Morford gathered a small group of blind men and women together at the Baptist Home on Throop and Greene Avenues in Brooklyn; the society was named the Mizpah Circle and its purpose was for advancing socially and financially those less fortunate than themselves; and

WHEREAS, On October 1, 1893, the Industrial Home for Blind Men, under the auspices of the Mizpah Circle, opened its doors; Eben Morford acted as superintendent and by 1894, 17 blind men lived in the Home; 10 were employed producing 416 cane seats, 28 hair mattresses and 4,500 brooms; and

WHEREAS, Within two years, on April 25, 1895, the Industrial Home for the Blind of the City of Brooklyn (IHB) was incorporated; for 50 years the IHB confined itself to services to blind men; the Brooklyn Bureau of Social Services and The Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor offered services to blind women; however, when these services were diminished, IHB opened its doors to women; and

WHEREAS, The IHB programs continued to flourish and in the post war years, a formal program for people who were deaf-blind was started; the agency shifted from the single focus of employment to a more comprehensive program of education and rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, During the 1950s, services were established in Nassau and Suffolk Counties; Burrwod, a residence for senior citizens who were blind and deaf-blind, was established on Long Island; the IHB also founded a nursery school for blind children; and

WHEREAS, In 1952, IHB established a Braille and Large Print Library to make sure that textbooks were available for children who were blind and mainstreamed within their local schools; in 1953, a summer day camp was opened to encourage participation in sports, music and drama; and

WHEREAS, IHB initiated a major blindness prevention program in 1967 for pre-school children on Long Island; with the assistance of volunteers, IHB staff identified children who needed immediate medical inter-

vention in order to prevent vision loss; and

WHEREAS, In 1967, the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) was established by a unanimous act of Congress and IHB was chosen to operate the program which provided comprehensive rehabilitation training for people with a severe dual sensory loss or impairment; and

WHEREAS, Temporary training facilities were created in New Hyde Park, and in 1976, HKNC's new headquarters opened a 25 acre site in Sands Point, Long Island; the Center's national services expanded to include several regional offices, affiliate agencies and later a National Training Team, Technical Assistance Center, National Parent Network and Services for Older Adults; and

WHEREAS, In 1983, IHB established a day treatment program for adults who were developmentally disabled and who were also blind or deaf-blind; in 1985, the Board of Trustees decided to change the name of The Industrial Home for the Blind (IHB) to Helen Keller Services for the Blind (HKSB); and

WHEREAS, New programs continued to develop and the Parent/Infant Program was established in 1988; it provided intensive therapeutic and educational services for preschoolers and infants who were blind; that same year, HKSB established Supported Employment services to provide ongoing individualized long-term support at the job site; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, program and facility changes have been made, as needed, to reflect the needs of a diverse population of persons who live in the New York City Metropolitan Area; and

WHEREAS, Throughout its distinguished history, Helen Keller Services for the Blind has served tens of thousands of blind and visually impaired individuals throughout the New York Metropolitan Area; and

WHEREAS, The ability of this agency to respond to changing needs over the past 100 years has sustained its viability as an important resource; HKSB is well prepared and positioned to move into its second century maintaining a commitment to the mission of enabling people of all ages who are visually impaired, blind or deaf-blind to lead as independent a

life as possible within their own communities; and

WHEREAS, Organizations and individuals who are devoted to improving the quality of life for others, enabling them to build lives of dignity and self-worth are deserving of the highest praise and recognition; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 34th Anniversary Sound & Light Gala of the Helen Keller Services for the Blind to be held on Thursday, September 23, 2010, and to commend this year's four outstanding women for special honor who have truly made a difference; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Helen Keller Services for the Blind, and the aforementioned honorees.