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Marketplace: Shopping Dining & Entertainment Home Improvement Health Business Directory Real Estate Regional

- News**
- Front Page
 - Community News
 - School Beat
 - Opinions & Commentary
 - Letters
 - Government
 - Calendar
 - Health
 - Real Estate
 - Legals
- Links**
- Contact Info
 - Micromedia
- Services**
- Coupon Values
 - Classifieds
 - Place a Classified
 - Advertisers Index
 - News Archive
 - Search Archive

Community News

July 19, 2007

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Tourette Syndrome Association Of New Jersey Honors Local Para-Professional



From left to right: Ms. Michele Hawkes, Mrs. Mary Jo Codey and Ms. Barbara Gantwerk, assistant commissioner, NJ Department of Education.

BRICK - The Board of Directors of Tourette Syndrome Association of New Jersey Inc., (TSANJ) has announced that Ms. Michele Hawkes, a para-professional from Brick Township High School, has been selected as the 2007 TSANJ Educator of the Year. The award was presented to Ms. Hawkes by Mrs. Mary Jo Codey, a teacher in West Orange, N.J. and wife of New Jersey Senator Richard Codey.

The award is presented annually to an educator in New Jersey who has made a significant contribution to the well-being of an individual with Tourette syndrome. The nomination is made by the family or individual who has received the special support. The honor is given to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts toward the betterment of an individual's life and to advocate for individuals with Tourette syndrome by furthering the awareness of TS.

Ms. Hawkes was nominated by Eileen and Dennis D'Andrea, whose son, a high school sophomore, was diagnosed with Tourette syndrome when he was 4 years old. "Michele has always displayed a sensitivity and commitment towards Mickey that goes above and beyond her job description. She not only assists him in his day-to-day school functions, but offers continuous encouragement, support and guidance. She is a strong advocate for our son and has been an integral part of his success," added Mr. D'Andrea. "Michele has always been there for Mickey. We were lucky to have found such a dedicated and caring individual to help our son."

"I am honored to have received this year's award and am happy that I can be there for Mickey to help him with his daily challenges," remarked Ms. Hawkes upon receiving her award.

This year's award was presented during TSANJ's Fifth Annual Recognition Dinner held on May 16 at Rutgers University. The event also honored Senator Richard Codey and Mrs. Mary Jo Codey for their humanitarian interest and support of New Jersey's Tourette syndrome community and all persons dealing with mental health issues. At the same dinner, TSANJ also announced the winners of its 2007 scholarship awards, the only scholarship award in the nation for TS students.

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