

Mary Lu Bucci Selected to Receive Lifetime Achievement Award

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Leonardtown, MD – January 9, 2020 - The St. Mary's County Commission for Women (CFW) has selected Mary Lu Bucci, former Director of the St. Mary's County Special Olympics, to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2020 Women's History Banquet.

The Special Olympics is a nonpartisan organization that supports policies, legislation and practices that guarantee the rights, full participation, and integration of people with intellectual disabilities. The Special Olympics program offers year-round sports programs for children and adults, empowering athletes to be valued members of their community and respected members of society.

Bucci first became involved with the Special Olympics because her son wanted to participate as an athlete. After seeing the joy and network of friends provided by the group, she became a committed volunteer. In 1990, Bucci became the county director of the Special Olympics. She oversaw all aspects of the Special Olympics for 25 years, including administration, fundraising, and coordinating over 300 athletes participating in 14 different sports, and more than 600 volunteers.

Bucci has been integral to the increased participation of St. Mary's County's Special Olympics athletes in local games, state games and world games. Teams have traveled and competed in Maryland, Connecticut, Iowa, North Carolina, Washington, Nebraska, California, New Jersey, China, Japan, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Arab Emirates.

While the focus of Special Olympics is the athletes' participation in sports, Bucci emphasizes the broader purpose. She has observed the progress made toward eliminating the stigma, stereotypes, isolation, and discrimination people with intellectual disabilities face – most importantly concerning access to sports, health, and education opportunities and services.

"The Special Olympics has been a big part of broadcasting to the world that individuals with developmental disabilities nonetheless have abilities and demonstrates what can be done rather than what can't be done," Bucci said. "It has changed the vocabulary around disability."

Although Bucci retired as director in 2015, she continues to support the Special Olympics. She appreciates the support of all her family over the years as well as their continuous volunteering hours.

St. Mary's County has much to be grateful to Bucci for her dedication and tireless energy in making Special Olympics such a valuable resource in St. Mary's County. She will be honored at the Commission for Women's annual banquet March 19, 2020, at the Bay District Volunteer Fire Department Social Hall in Lexington Park.

The event is open to the public and seat reservations are available for purchase for \$30. Proceeds from the banquet go to the Jane Hale Sypher Scholarship Fund, established to support nontraditional students at the College of Southern Maryland who are single parents or displaced homemakers. For more information, contact Debra Kane at 301-475-4200, ext. 71680, or Debra.Kane@stmarysmd.com, or visit www.stmarysmd.com/boards/groups/default.aspx?board=14.

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