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GIVING CHILDREN A VOICE
--ONE WOMAN'S JOURNEY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF
CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS--

Glen Cove, NY March 24, 2010—For Dr. Ellenmorris Tiegerman, the Founder and Executive Director of the School for Language and Communication Development (SLCD) it all started with one question, "How hard can it possibly be to start a school?" As SLCD celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, Dr. Tiegerman who is often lovingly referred to by many as Dr. T, still has no definitive answer. For Dr. Tiegerman her work will never be done even as she prepares to open a third school location in the fall welcoming more than 500 students with special needs, a much larger number than the 36 preschoolers she originally started with. For Dr. Tiegerman this is still just the beginning.

Dr. Tiegerman's journey started as a child in the 1960's watching her father try for ten years to teach her younger sister, who after suffering unfortunate head trauma which resulted in severe learning problems, the fundamentals of education in their apartment in Manhattan. Dr. Tiegerman stated, "There were no special education options for my sister at that time. I watched my father day after day try to teach her. In those years he never lost faith. That's where I get my strength to keep pushing. He gave me a great gift - persistence."

And that's just what Dr. Tiegerman did. "I was teaching at Adelphi University and I met Toya Davis, who now sits on SLCD's Board of Directors. She spoke of her son Jonathan and his language deficits and how there was no school in existence that could help him. I decided it was time to change that around." After months of fundraising and paperwork, Dr. Tiegerman opened SLCD with just 36 preschoolers. At the end of the summer, she began to realize that they didn't have enough space to house next year's students and began to look into ways to expand the school.

"It was a long journey with the help of many. We moved from Great Neck to Bellmore. Once we moved to Bellmore we began our K-3rd grade program and we stayed in that location for 10 years until we unfortunately lost our lease." At that time, Mario Fischetti, Chairman of the Board of Directors, suggested an abandoned building in Glen Cove to house the school. "I clearly remember rushing over to the location and thinking, if I could pick a building from a postcard to house our school children, this building was it." At the end of the day SLCD purchased the building, the same building they have today, for \$650,000 and never looked back.

Through the years, SLCD continued to follow their students through the school system and provide further needed education. However, in 2001, the New York State Education Department capped the school age enrollment at 66 children. SLCD already had lengthy waiting lists of children that needed the specialized attention of SLCD's programs and services. And so, Dr. Tiegerman set out on what would be a ten year battle to expand SLCD's programs and services to Long Island, New York City and Westchester students with disabilities. During this time, SLCD was approved to open a second school location in Woodside, Queens that would serve middle and high school students grades 6-12.

In 2010 after years battling with the New York State Education Department, the lawsuit was settled. SLCD is now approved to provide educational services in its Glen Cove program for students in grades K through 8 with a capacity of 165 students. The Woodside facility will now serve students in middle school with a maximum capacity of 156 students. The high school students will move to a new facility in Richmond Hill to provide additional physical space for vocational training and life skills programs; this program will have an enrollment capacity of 168 students. All of SLCD's programs will also serve additional disabilities including autism, mental retardation, learning disability, emotional disturbance,

other health impairment, traumatic brain injury along with language and communication disorders.

"At the end of the day it was worth it! Being able to help all of these children and future students is a result of courage, determination and a dream on the part of our parents, teachers, Board of Directors, and SLCD Administrators. They worked with me tirelessly over the past ten years as the school struggled to help our children and families remain at SLCD. Although this was not a path that I would have chosen, nor was it a decision which I made lightly, the lawsuit was something that had to be done for the sake of the children that we serve."

But, the journey does not end here. Dr. Tiegerman has great plans for the future of SLCD. She hopes that one day she will be able to help students who have graduated get placed in jobs. These adult services will also encompass the education of the local community about the importance of hiring those with a disability. In the future Dr. Tiegerman can see a living space, counseling services, a junior college and so on. No dream is too big.

"I truly believe goodness attracts goodness. And I am lucky to say that SLCD has a lot of goodness to share. New ventures are on the horizon and we hope that the next 25 years will be as filled with joy and wonderment as the past 25 have been. Throughout this journey, we never lost sight of our mission and goals as a school for children with disabilities. We have shared an extraordinary experience which will be viewed in the future with pride at what was accomplished in our 25th year."

The School for Language and Communication Development provides special education services to children with language disorders including those along the autism spectrum continuum. SLCD's program has grown from 36 preschoolers to more than 400 children ages 18 months to 21 years in elementary, middle and high school programs. As SLCD celebrates its 25th Anniversary this year, its mission to meet the special needs of children unable to speak or communicate still remains constant and the School's motto "Language Learning for Lifelong Success" is continuously upheld. For information on the School for Language and Communication Development visit www.SLCD.org.