



**PRESENTATION
OF THE 2009
JOAN WALD BAKEN
AWARD**

The Joan Wald Baken Award

- Established in 1997 to honor the memory of the devoted member of DPHD who dedicated herself to individuals with physical and health disabilities.
- Up to two awards are given annually to individuals whose accomplishments represent exemplary advocacy and educational practice.
- The recipient must be involved in directly impacting individuals with physical and health disabilities in schools, hospitals, clinics, homes, or in the community.

2009 Recipient of the
Joan Wald Baken Award

Dr. Kathryn Wolff Heller



Dr. Kathryn Wolff Heller

- **Professor, Georgia State University**
- **Coordinator of the Physical and Health Disabilities (Orthopedic Impairments) Program since 1992**

Dr. Kathryn Wolff Heller

- Dr. Heller began her career as a registered nurse, but developed a passion for working with people who have disabilities and shifted her career path.
- She has been a classroom teacher for students with physical, health, and multiple disabilities and has been a professor at Georgia State University since 1992.

Leading the field of physical and health disabilities...

- She has authored 6 books, over 50 book chapters, over 35 articles, and numerous monographs.
- She has had 20 grants and currently directs the Georgia Sensory Assistance Project.
- She directed the Georgia Bureau for Students with Physical and Health Impairments for many years. This was a state-funded grant that allowed her to reach teachers and related service personnel throughout Georgia via trainings and classroom visits that emphasized appropriate teaching practices for students with physical disabilities.

Serving in the field...

- Dr. Heller serves as the coordinator of the Metro Atlanta Orthopedic Impairments Consortium
- She is a Past President of DPHD and remains active on the board by serving as co-chair of the Critical Issues and Leadership Committee.

Making a Difference in the Lives of Individuals with Physical and Health Disabilities...

- Dr. Heller has a passion for developing and teaching teachers to implement effective instructional practices for individuals with physical and health disabilities.
- She developed the Nonverbal Reading Approach which is a method to teach students with severe speech and physical impairments to read using internal speech.
 - Several research studies have demonstrated that the NRA is effective for improving the reading abilities of students with SSPI.
 - **MANY** children's lives have been changed by this method!!!

Making a difference...

- Dr. Heller supervises student teachers (usually in their own classrooms). She spends hours and hours helping them improve their teaching abilities to impact their students' learning.
- Many times, Dr. Heller has gone to schools to work with teachers who are not her university students or to work with specific students to help the teacher figure out how to best teach them.... just because she is passionate about making sure children with disabilities receive the best possible education!


Making a difference...

Quotes from teachers:

- “You have taught me so much over the last couple of years. But more than any lesson I have learned, I have come to count on you as a mentor and valuable resource. I hope you always continue to teach. You have a remarkable ability to lead and help others become better at what they do. Very few people have had such an impact on my life as you. ...I will be able to teach my students with physical disabilities more effectively because of you.” Student
- “I now know how to teach my students to read and they are making progress because of you.” Student

Making a difference...

- Families and students who have physical disabilities also have written how Dr. Heller has directly impacted their lives. One of the many examples is written by a family of a student with severe cerebral palsy who Dr. Heller taught reading and academics. Because of Dr. Heller's work with and advocacy for this student, the student's educational label changed from "severe mental retardation" to the correct category of "orthopedic impairments" (with mild to no intellectual disability):
- "Kathy Heller -deepest gratitude for:
 - looking beyond – or rather- within the broken "shell" and believing that there are possibilities and capabilities not seen on the outside;
 - for not making assumptions;
 - for expecting more than assumed "expectations";
 - for believing in N.;
 - and for giving her the opportunity to learn.
 - You are an incredible teacher, and a wonderful human being. Thank you for being part of N's life."
- There can be no higher praise than that!



**Thank you,
Dr. Kathy Heller,
for making a difference
in the lives of people
with physical and health
disabilities!!!**