



Elizabeth (Betsy) Santelli

November 3, 2002

Elizabeth Ann (Betsy) Santelli, age 55, family support researcher and advocate. Betsy Santelli, who graduated from Carleton College in 1969 and received a M.Ed from the University of North Carolina in 1972, so appreciated the professional opportunities that came to her as she worked for over 25 years with and for children with special needs and their families. And even more, Betsy loved and appreciated her family - for sharing the richness of life itself and those special connections that come from within families. She lived life to the fullest and gave her complete energy to each of life's adventures - including pancreatic cancer. Betsy died October 31st at home in Golden Valley. Betsy started her professional career as a teacher in special education - teaching a few years with the Osseo Independent School District.

Recognizing that children are best supported by having strong families, Betsy transitioned into the area of family support by working in the Minnesota Early Childhood and Family Education program during its early years of funding. A move to Champaign-Urbana, IL, offered Betsy the opportunity to become involved in federally-funded special education research at the University of Illinois, and for several years she provided training and technical assistance to early childhood special education teachers nationally. In 1988, after moving to Overland Park, KS, Betsy joined the staff of the Beach Center on Families and Disability at The University of Kansas. For the next 14 years, Betsy coordinated several different research projects involving hundreds of families of children with special needs and program directors of Parent to Parent

programs. Parent to Parent programs provide emotional and informational support to parents and children/adults with disabilities through a carefully made parent to parent match, and Betsy's research partnerships with Parent to Parent mean that Parent to Parent programs are more visible, credible, fundable and available to families today. Working closely with two parents involved in Parent to Parent, Betsy co-authored "Parent to Parent: Connecting Families of Children with Special Needs", published in 2001. Serving as the Beach Center's liaison to families nationally, Betsy also worked closely with another national parent organization - The Grassroots Consortium on Disabilities. Member programs of the Grassroots Consortium on Disabilities provide community-based comprehensive family support services to culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities and their families; and Betsy shared the research and resources of the Beach Center with Grassroots programs to help strengthen and fund these programs. Surviving family members include Betsy's husband of 33 years, James Peter Santelli of Golden Valley; daughter, Maren Santelli and her husband Stephen Pollard of Lawrence, KS; and daughter, Tamara Santelli of St. Paul. In addition, survivors include Betsy's mother and step-father, Maxine and Weir Brown; and brothers, Richard Stewart and Phil Stewart, all of Washington, D.C.; also mother-in-law & father-in-law, Elaine & Russell Farrell. A Celebration of Betsy's life will be held on Monday, 11/4 at 3:30 PM at First Universalist Church, 3400 Dupont Ave. S., Mpls. Washburn-McReavy Edina Chapel 952-920-3996