

## MARY ANN DAYTON FITZGERALD RECEIVES 2009 JANE C. BOURNS AWARD

It is my pleasure to introduce Mary Ann Dayton Fitzgerald, recipient of the 2009 Jane C Bourns Award.

Mary Ann and Jane Bourns shared many of the same exceptional qualities: a deep passion for infant mental health, a deep understanding of how to empower families and the persistence to successfully create system's change.

Mary Ann has devoted her career to working with families and children.

She began her career as a teacher and counselor at the American School for the Deaf. Mary Ann worked as an assistant in a child care center and after receiving her Masters in Counseling, worked as a marriage and family counselor at a child guidance center. During her tenure she ran groups for young mothers and teens on improving self-esteem. She developed and ran an outreach program to increase access to subsidized housing and connect families to support services. Mary Ann went on to direct a community health center focusing on women and family services.

I had the privilege of meeting Mary Ann while I was working at the Children's Trust Fund. She became the Early Childhood Specialist Interventionist at the Department of Children and Families because she wanted to make a difference. She was acutely aware of the work to be done and worked tirelessly to make positive changes. I remember hearing about a visit to a therapeutic preschool. She didn't just walk in and sit down. Mary Ann went on the bus with the children and saw that they were on the bus for two hours, for a three hour program. She was and is not afraid to speak up when a child is not being treated with respect.

Mary Ann was a founding member of the Infant Toddler Work group, an outgrowth of the Early Childhood Task force, that ultimately became the CT-Infant Mental Health Association. It is no surprise that Mary Ann became the first president of the association. She spent hours researching how other associations were created, set up the policy and guidelines and created the foundation which leads to the success of the organization today.

Most importantly Mary Ann is a person with a strong sense of right and wrong. She never fails to speak up when she feels the system is not working for children.

Mary Ann is also a very spiritual person. She has a life stages consulting business. She taught me that one needs to take care of oneself in order to take care of others. That healthy surroundings are just as important as working hard. And finally, anyone that helps a friend Feng Shui a state agency cubicle is an exceptional person!

I am honored to present the Jane Bourns award to Mary Ann Dayton Fitzgerald.