

2009-J1717

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 35th Anniversary of Birch Family Services to be celebrated May 14, 2009

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize that the quality and character of life in the communities across New York State are reflective of the concerned and dedicated efforts of those organizations and individuals who would devote themselves to the welfare of the community and its citizenry; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 35th Anniversary of Birch Family Services to be observed with a year-long celebration beginning Thursday, May 14, 2009, at The Players Club; and

WHEREAS, Birch Family Services, Inc. was incorporated May 7, 1975, as the Herbert G. Birch School for Exceptional Children; founded by Phyllis Susser, and named in honor of her mentor, Dr. Herbert G. Birch, this agency has grown from one small school into a large network of programs, serving a wide range of New Yorkers who face significant challenges; and

WHEREAS, Its mission is threefold: to develop and administer programs effectively; and to help families become outstanding advocates for their children; and

WHEREAS, Today, in Birch early childhood programs throughout New York City, 1,000 young children with severe developmental delays are receiving the specialized therapeutic and educational services they need to overcome the obstacles they and their families face; and

WHEREAS, Birch Family Services believes that the progress of children with significant disabilities is greatly enhanced in settings that include typically-developing children; likewise, they believe that children who are developing typically thrive in the enriched educational

environments provided by the organization; and

WHEREAS, Because of this, an additional 400 typically-developing children with developmental delays "graduate" each year and either enter public school for typically-developing children or are able to participate in less intensive special classes; in addition, all of Birch preschoolers get the best "head start" possible; and

WHEREAS, The Phyllis L. Susser School for Exceptional Children in Flushing, New York, serves children age 5-16 with autism, mental retardation, emotional disabilities, severe speech and language impairments, and traumatic brain injuries whose needs cannot be met by the public school system; combined with the "annex" in Washington Heights, which serves the needs of 5-8 year-olds with autism, the school-aged program currently serves 111 children; and

WHEREAS, Birch Family Services is renowned for its expertise in the education of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders; they train nearly 500 staff each year in effective methods for these children and trainees come from the New York City Department of Education, as well as other districts in the metropolitan area, sister agencies and their own schools; and

WHEREAS, Although Birch Family Services is best known for its schools, it also operates other services for people with special needs; 59 adolescents and adults with severe developmental disabilities receive around-the-clock care in their eight residencies located in Brooklyn and Queens; many of these individuals had been living in state institutions but now enjoy real homes in communities in which they can actively participate; and

WHEREAS, Its new Family Support Services Program is dedicated to strengthening and empowering families to meet the challenges of parent-

ing children with disabilities; this program will be a vital resource to all families of children with special needs in the New York City region; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when organizations of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 35th Anniversary of Birch Family Services to be celebrated May 14, 2009; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Birch Family Services.