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UPPER ST. CLAIR CITIZENS' GROUP RECOGNIZED AS 'INSPIRATION'

USC-WAVES honored by International Baccalaureate Organization of North America

PITTSBURGH, Aug. 24 - Upper St. Clair parents and residents active with USC- WAVES (We're About Value and Excellence for our Schools) are the 2006 recipients of the Inspiration Award, given by the International Baccalaureate Organization of North America and the Caribbean, a New York-based regional office of the International Baccalaureate Organization.

pye "It is a privilege to receive this recognition from IB-North America," said Victoria Pye, an educator who has two children in Upper St. Clair's International Baccalaureate program and a leader of USC-WAVES who accepted the award during a ceremony at the IB organization's recent annual conference in the Bahamas. "I am humbled to have represented the dedication and passion of hundreds of USC-WAVES members who are committed to maintaining excellence in our community's schools."



The group took shape over a matter of weeks beginning in February, when a slim majority of the Upper St. Clair School Board voted to eliminate the IB program, a rigorous academic program designed to encourage critical thinking and awareness of a global society. In addition to supporting academic excellence in Upper St. Clair, USC-WAVES works to encourage reasoned and reasonable discourse, good school board governance and an informed township electorate.

"But it's not controversy that makes USC-WAVES important," Bradley W. Richardson, regional director of IB-North America, wrote in the organization's conference program. "USC-WAVES rode the crest of a crash course in civics, bringing into sharp focus the critical role that parents and other community members play in the success of IB programs. This is local control of education at its finest." "We award this every year to someone who's inspired us, the IBNA staff. We work predominantly with schools, administrators and school directors, said Ralph Cline, deputy director of IB-North America. "But it's important to us, and touching, to have direct contact with parents and students. And to have parents and students rise up in support of what we do every day, it felt absolutely wonderful to us. There was no doubt at all for us about choosing to whom the award should go."

Upper St. Clair residents quickly raised more than \$45,000 to support the settlement of a lawsuit reluctantly filed by parents to protest the Upper St. Clair School Board's contentious Feb. 20 vote to abolish the district's prestigious International Baccalaureate Program. Facing citizen pressure and the lawsuit, school directors voted 7-2 on April 24 to accept terms of a settlement that included a one-time payment of \$45,000 by USC-WAVES to reinstate the program for a minimum of two years.

School directors have since asked for an internal review of the IB program, a move seen by many in the community as the first step to its final elimination following the 2007-2008 school year, when the terms of the settlement agreement no longer are binding. That review is ongoing, with board members voting Aug. 14 against the hiring of an outside consultant to assist USC administrators with the task.

Members of USC-WAVES recognize that the need for vigilance and support for excellent academic programming has not ended in Upper St. Clair schools. In addition, the group remains committed to supporting good school board governance and an informed township electorate.