

Elizabeth “Liz” Lucas Gilbert-2009

Elizabeth Gilbert laid a strong foundation for access and quality service delivery for people with disabilities in the St. Louis area. Liz joined the St. Louis Arc (then known as the St. Louis Association for Retarded Children) in the late 1960's. Because of her background in physical education, Liz realized it was important for children with disabilities to benefit from play and interaction with others, like all other children. From the swimming pool to the gym to the outdoors Liz looked for ways to involve children and young adults with disabilities in fun recreation and leisure activities. Under Liz's direction, the St. Louis Arc offered diverse recreation programs where individuals with developmental disabilities learned and practiced physical skills. The Saturday Night Fever dance club is still going strong today, 30 years later. Liz introduced overnight camping for people with developmental disabilities in the St. Louis area. This was often the first opportunity many of these children had to be away from home. Later Liz started "Camp Just For You" to extend the overnight camp experience to children and adults with one on one support needs. During the fall, winter and spring the program was expanded to include weekend mini camp programs held at various locations throughout St. Louis City and County. Her innovative approach grew to include cross country skiing, biking adventures, canoeing, rock climbing, and rappelling. "Camp Blue Sky" was the first camp serving people with disabilities in the nation to have a high adventure ropes course. An outstanding leader, motivator, and mentor to young professionals, Liz instills the need to give back to our profession, motivating thousands of community volunteers to give their time to programs for people with disabilities. Liz truly believed in the therapeutic value of leisure and recreation in improving the quality of life for all people. Liz was an active member of the American Camping Association, Missouri Park and Recreation Association, Missouri Therapeutic Recreation Society, and National Recreation and Park Association, an officer in every one of these organizations during her tenure at the St. Louis Arc. She received the MPRA Fellow Award. Liz Gilbert literally touched the lives of thousands of people in her 37-year career.