



2007

Long Island Advocate of the Year

MARY LOU BELDY

After working at the Suffolk County Office for the Aging, first as a caseworker and then as Supervisor of the unit, Mary Lou Beldy gained much knowledge of the problems and needs of seniors and worked on many programs that were designed to maintain the frail elderly in their homes and keep them out of institutions.

She then left to go into the family business – an electrical supply house - thereby gaining experience both in Human Resources and in a business setting.

Mary Lou Beldy worried how she was going to fill all those hours that were spent working; but luckily for many these concerns were quickly laid to rest!

Shortly after retirement, Mary Lou started training as an **Emergency Room Companion** for VIBS. In that capacity, she was on call twice a month. If there were any victims of domestic violence or sexual assault in the emergency rooms of area hospitals, an ERC was called to stay with the victim, offering support, counseling and information. Mary Lou had done some public speaking at area high schools and civic groups on domestic violence, rape or dating violence and she also helped out with the cell phone drive, raising funds for VIBS.

Next Mary Lou trained as an Ombudsperson and was assigned to visit Atria South Setauket. The Ombuds program is sponsored by the NYS Office for the Aging through a grant to Family Service League. Mary Lou visited Atria once a week and became aware of problems or concerns; sometimes it was just a matter of a senior not being able to get the services he or she was entitled to. She also decided to get involved in the AARP Tax-Aide program. Having never done her own taxes, she bravely persisted and just completed her 5th year of tax preparation for low and middle-income people. And she also completed her second year of working for HR Block as a seasonal tax associate.

And she works one morning a week at the HIICAP hotline at the Suffolk County Office for the Aging, helping seniors and those on disability navigate through the maze of health insurance issues.