

MRS. SHARLEEN RESHARD

Sometimes we don't know how much we've touched folks until we're gone. I think Sharleen Reshard is up there in heaven, looking down and smiling at all the many people in Hempstead whose lives she touched. I was one of those people. My early memories of Mrs. Reshard was seeing her at Board of Ed meetings five years ago with her trusty video camera, recording the sessions and taking careful note of the proceedings. She wasn't one of those in the back of the room shouting or making noise – that was not her style but she was quietly taking everything in and documenting it all for the future. You knew she was serious without her having to raise her voice. I recall an interview she did on News 12 when she quietly explained why Hempstead needed change when it came to education. I recall that she went to Albany to talk about her concerns about education in Hempstead and, encouraged, eventually ran for a seat on the Board she had once criticized and won handily. She knew she could make more of a difference being on the board, than being outside of it. Mrs. Reshard had an almost regal presence about her. She was friendly and polite but she was also very professional. You knew she meant business, which she did literally. As a lead member of the District audit committee, she pored over hundreds of pieces of paper and documentation, looking for facts and pearls of information, trying to find out how business was being done and how could it be done better. Mrs. Reshard cared about the children of Hempstead; they were a priority for her -- from Pre-K to post graduate. I recall her attending PTSA meetings at the Middle School when I first got involved -- we could count on her to attend regularly (even after being elected to the Board), participate in our fundraising efforts and being a member in actions and in deeds. She also attended other building PTA meetings, as well. I recall her attending a PTA Summer Experience Leadership Conference weekend in upstate NY in 2005, taking the 6 hour bus ride with us and talking about her passion for improving education in Hempstead. She also attended panels about the importance of strong school board leadership and ways that parents and the community can help children improve their literacy skills. Mrs. Reshard was also a common fixture at each Homecoming Event in November, often coming to our booth to buy homemade cake to aid us in fundraising -- even before she was a Board member and it became one of her BOE duties. She could always be counted on to buy raffle tickets, or sweatshirts...or whatever we asked of her in the moment. She enhanced our meetings. The memory I treasure most is when Mrs. Reshard accompanied a small band of us in marching though Hempstead days after a teenager had been stabbed on the high school handball court. She locked arms with us; we sang songs and we protested the "violence" that we felt knocking at Hempstead's door that cold day in January 2008. Recently she was supportive of our efforts to revitalize SEPTA (the special education PTA). During Board meetings Mrs. Reshard would ask smart, pointed questions and still maintain that dignified calm that we all came to take for granted. I recall the last time I saw her a few months ago. It was after a BOE meeting, as she climbed the stairs to exit the bandbox, she glanced over at us parents and community members with one of her "It's gonna be OK" looks, as she headed into the executive session, and she smiled. I know she's smiling right now and there are many who were touched by her, who are smiling back..... –Bev Robinson