

# Nexus

The Newsletter of The Baldwin Foundation for Education

## SHEILA HOROWITZ COHEN '47 1929 ~ 2015

This past fall, the Baldwin community lost its most enduring supporter and BHS one of its most loyal alumni - Sheila Horowitz Cohen '47. Talented in art and music, Sheila was very actively involved in Sportsnite and supported the event with her presence for the rest of her life. Sheila married Victor Cohen following her college graduation and returned to her Baldwin roots. When her children entered Brookside School, she embarked on a 50-year career in PTA. She was a tenacious advocate for improved football helmets, camp safety, seat belts in school buses, banning corporal punishment in schools, and the removal of toxic art supplies. Her efforts resulted in legislative changes that have benefited generations of children in New York State. She also mobilized thousands to send pink slips to Albany legislators, "firing" them for lack of adequate school funding. Sheila often introduced herself at functions as "past president of everything," and indeed she was. As past president of Brookside PTA, Baldwin PTA Council, Nassau Region PTA, and New York State PTA, Sheila's commitment to the Baldwin community never



wavered. Throughout the years, she attended Brookside PTA Founder's Day celebrations, PTA-sponsored Candidates Forums, and Sportsnite Banquets. She mentored a legion of PTA leaders and school board members. From 1993 to 2001, she expanded her legislative efforts beyond the Baldwin community in her work for the Child Care Council of Nassau County, organizing legislative breakfasts, legislative bus trips to Albany, and coordinating community outreach. She served as president of the Baldwin Foundation for Education from 2002 to 2008. Under her leadership the BFE website was created, and she continued to be involved in every aspect of the foundation, awarding BFE scholarships at the annual Baldwin High School Senior Awards and contributing her opinions and ideas at foundation meetings. Ask anyone who has known Sheila and the word "mentor" comes up over and over again. It was her mission not just to advocate but to inspire others to advocate and, if necessary, teach them how to do so. She called up people she thought had potential, worked with them, encouraged them, prodded them, and supported them. She brought them into the fold whether they were her contemporary or a brand new PTA member. As a true leader, she coaxed and inspired everybody to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more. Sheila always saw the possibilities. Often outspoken and always a straight shooter, she embraced challenge and transformed adversity into something positive. She saw promise in many and potential in those who could not see it in themselves. Her daughter mentioned an invocation Sheila gave in April that said in part, "May your heart be touched by children and made joyful by them. To work on their behalf is to blossom within." Sheila Horowitz Cohen passed away at the age of 85, but she never got old and never lost her passion.

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*Mary Jo O'Hagan*