

Senate Resolution 17

By: Senator Unterman of the 45th

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing and commending Ari Russell on the occasion of her retirement; and for other
2 purposes.

3 WHEREAS, Ari Russell, one of the pioneers of the prevention field, is retiring as the
4 executive director of GUIDE, after 28 years and 3 months of service; and

5 WHEREAS, GUIDE was formed as a joint effort between the Gwinnett County Board of
6 Commissioners and the Gwinnett County Board of Education in order to provide a
7 comprehensive, coordinated and proactive approach to reducing and preventing substance
8 use and abuse; and

9 WHEREAS, the number of lives impacted through the work GUIDE has accomplished in the
10 last 28 years are immeasurable, and Ari has been the catalyst for the change that has occurred
11 in Gwinnett County and across Georgia; and

12 WHEREAS, under Ari's leadership, GUIDE has had many significant accomplishments,
13 including:

14 (1) Conducting a prevention needs assessment in 1986 that led to recommendations to the
15 Gwinnett County Board of Education that were subsequently adopted, including the
16 adoption of K-12 drug prevention curriculum, providing staff development about
17 prevention issues, conducting drug use surveys on a regular basis, and adopting a
18 no-smoking policy that included faculty and staff;

19 (2) Working with the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Department to develop the ADVANCE
20 program, a substance abuse and violence prevention curriculum that was conducted by
21 deputies in all fifth grade classes in Gwinnett County;

22 (3) Overseeing all state-funded prevention services in Gwinnett, Rockdale, and Newton
23 Counties for five years, helping to build the infrastructure in Rockdale and Newton
24 Counties until the Family Connection collaboratives were able to take on the
25 responsibilities;

- 26 (4) Partnering with the Department of Public Health to secure a CDC tobacco prevention
27 grant that led to the formation of Smoke Free Gwinnett and, eventually, the adoption of
28 clean indoor air ordinances in three Gwinnett cities, followed by the county;
- 29 (5) Establishing the Gwinnett Alliance With Youth that formed Community Cluster Care
30 Teams in every school cluster, increased public awareness about risk and protective factors
31 and developmental assets, and instituted the "Champions" project;
- 32 (6) Originating the Georgia Teen Institute in 1989, which has operated annually since then
33 with over 12,000 youth having participated in the program;
- 34 (7) Developing Youth Volunteer Centers in 1998, with the first located at Collins Hill
35 High School and supported by funding from United Way. The initiative evolved into the
36 Youth Leadership & Action program and the 3-Year Youth Action Team Empowerment
37 Model. Since 1998, over fifty Youth Action Teams have been established, providing youth
38 leadership and service opportunities for thousands of middle and high school students in
39 Gwinnett County; and
- 40 (8) Establishing the GUIDE Youth Advisory Board and College Advisory Board; and

41 WHEREAS, Ari was one of the founders of the National Association of Prevention
42 Professionals and Advocates, a membership organization that advocated on a national level
43 for professionalism in the field and adoption of research-based strategies and of the
44 Prevention Credentialing Consortium of Georgia, bringing a professional certification to
45 prevention specialists in Georgia. A mentor, friend, and role model for other GUIDE Staff
46 and many others across the state, Ari's leadership has influenced many prevention
47 professionals and partners and is felt throughout the field and our state; and

48 WHEREAS, though there are countless partners in the work GUIDE does that makes their
49 work successful every day, the work GUIDE has accomplished would not have been the
50 same without Ari Russell, whose influence will be felt far and wide for many years to come;
51 and

52 WHEREAS, Ari can retire knowing that her life, her work, and her leadership made a
53 difference.

54 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
55 commend Ari Russell for her over 28 years of service to this state and extend their heartfelt
56 wishes for her continued health and happiness.

57 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed

58 to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to Ari Russell.