

**BY:** Senator PHILLIPS

**COMMEMORATING** the 50th Anniversary of the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults

**WHEREAS,** It is incumbent upon the people of the State of New York to recognize and acknowledge those organizations within our midst who have made significant contributions to the quality of life therein; and

**WHEREAS,** From time to time this Legislative Body takes note of certain extraordinary individuals and organizations it wishes to recognize for their valued contributions to the success and progress of society and publicly acknowledge their endeavors which have enhanced the basic humanity among us all; and

**WHEREAS,** This Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults; and

**WHEREAS,** This momentous occasion is being recognized with numerous activities throughout the year; the celebration kicked off with a Sip N' Paint Event on Wednesday, March 15, 2017, and will culminate with a Luncheon on Saturday, October 7, 2017, which will pay tribute to pioneers and innovators who have paved the way in service to the deaf-blind community; and

**WHEREAS,** The origins of the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNC) go back to October 3, 1967, when then-President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law amendments to the Vocational Rehabilitation Act that called for a National Center for people who are deaf-blind; and

**WHEREAS,** Staff training began immediately and in 1970, the National Center moved into a converted warehouse in New Hyde Park, before moving to its present headquarters in Sands Point, New York, in 1976; and

**WHEREAS,** HKNC is the national division of Helen Keller Services (HKS), which also includes Helen Keller Services for the Blind, a regional division serving the New York City/Long Island area; and

**WHEREAS,** The only organization of its kind, HKNC provides training and resources exclusively to people age 16 and over who have combined vision and hearing loss; and

**WHEREAS,** Furthermore, HKNC provides support and learning opportunities to professionals and family members, and maintains a National Registry of Persons who are Deaf-Blind; and

**WHEREAS,** HKNC instructors are sensitive to the cultural differences between students with different levels of hearing and vision loss and varying educational backgrounds, providing individualized training and

guidance to each student; and

**WHEREAS,** Under the able leadership of its Executive Director Susan Ruzenski, HKNC gives people who are deaf-blind the tools to live, work and thrive in the communities of their choice; and

**WHEREAS,** A truly renowned and vital organization, students travel from across the country to HKNC's headquarters in Sands Point, New York, for on-campus training in assistive technology, vocational services, orientation and mobility, as well as communication and independent living; furthermore, its regional offices bring HKNC resources to communities throughout the United States; and

**WHEREAS,** Today, Helen Keller National Center oversees 11 regional offices across the United States and is the only comprehensive national program that provides information, referral, support, and training exclusively to youths and adults who are deaf-blind; and

**WHEREAS,** Over its distinguished 50 year history, HKNC has demonstrated continuous service to the residents and communities which it serves; and

**WHEREAS,** The success of HKNC is in direct correlation to the efforts of its staff, whose involvement is, and always has been, characterized by an impressive commitment, an unbridled enthusiasm, and an uncompromising standard of excellence in all endeavors on behalf of the organization and the community it serves; and

**WHEREAS,** It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when organizations of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be recognized and applauded by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED,** That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults.