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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**President of Julie Billiart School honored for her incredible effort to educate students of all abilities, especially those with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

April 2014

CLEVELAND – Sister Agnesmarie LoPorto, SND, president of Julie Billiart School (JBS), is being honored at the Milestones 12th Annual Autism Spectrum Disorder Conference in June for her dedication to meeting the educational needs of children of all learning abilities.

“In her many decades at the Julie Billiart School, Sister Agnesmarie has been a tireless advocate on behalf of children with special needs – believing that children deserve a safe, supportive, quality education,” Lisa O’Brien, a parent of a student attending JBS, said when she nominated LoPorto.

LoPorto will be awarded the Professional Excellence Award for her dedication to educating and preparing her students for success, especially the growing number of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

“Sister Agnesmarie has created a caring community for children with a variety of special needs,” Ilana Hoffer Skoff, Milestones executive director and co-founder, said. “Her dedication to professionalizing the school’s services is a major factor in her being recognized.”

During her 24 years as the JBS principle, LoPorto led many school innovations including a six-classroom addition that now holds an art therapy room, music room and provides resource rooms with two full-time intervention specialists. She also implemented support services needed for the changing population of JBS through incorporating speech-language therapists, an art therapist, occupational therapist and behavior therapist, and social skills instruction. During her leadership for six years as president, JBS transitioned to a governing Board of Directors.

Along with Sister Agnesmarie LoPorto, four other individuals will be honored at the Conference for their efforts to provide services and supports for individuals with disabilities including: Alison Edie-Krohe, special education teacher at Orchard Middle School, receiving the Outstanding Educator Award; Diane DePasquale-Hagerty, executive director of Medina Creative Housing, receiving the Community Innovator Award; Justin Bachman, student at Solon High School, receiving the Teen Trailblazer Award; and Sarah Rintamaki, executive director of Connecting for Kids, receiving the Parent Tribute Award.

Milestones 12th Annual Autism Spectrum Disorder Conference will be June 18-19 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Cleveland I-X Center. Parents and professionals are invited to attend and enjoy over 75 educational workshops. New to this year, the Conference will offer exclusive new parent features, a Medical Track, Employment Track and more. National keynotes include Dr. Peter Gerhardt, EdD, national autism consultant, and Brittany Lauber and Justin Rooney, self-advocates and co-chairs of the Ohio State University/Central Ohio Chapter of the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network. Find more information and register at milestones.org.

**About Milestones Autism Resources**

Founded in 2003, Milestones Autism Resources, previously known as Milestones Autism Organization, helps individuals with autism throughout Northeast Ohio reach their unique potential and is the first call for help at each transition of an individual’s life. Milestones focuses on **educating** and **coaching** for family members and professionals in evidence-based practical strategies. Its conferences, workshops, professional development, referral calls and online resources **connect** the autism community with vital information, and each other. Milestones serves more than 1,500 people each year and reaches 34,000 unique visitors through its website, milestones.org, that provides more than 900 autism resources.

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