

# Siena Staff Receive Awards for Leadership in Dyslexia Education

*Erik Heyer and Jillian Darefsky Honored for Contributions*



SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, October 25, 2006 – Last Friday evening, the Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center held its annual benefit gala and awards ceremony at the Strathmore Mansion in North Bethesda, MD. During the ceremony, two members of The Siena School staff were honored for their contributions to dyslexia education. ASDEC is one of the Washington D.C. area’s leading organizations serving teachers and tutors of students with reading and related language-based learning difficulties.

**Jillian Darefsky** received ASDEC’s annual award for “*Outstanding Teacher of Dyslexic Students*”. Ms. Darefsky is the school director and an English teacher at The Siena School. She is in her eighth year, largely as a teacher of students with language-based learning differences. Ms. Darefsky has completed extensive graduate coursework in the field, including a Masters in Specific Learning Difficulties, with merit, from Middlesex University (UK).

“It truly is the best job in the world to be able to work daily with such talented young men and women,” said Ms. Darefsky. “When we are able to create the right learning environment, every child can succeed and I am fortunate to be surrounded by many outstanding teachers who are working tirelessly to afford these children the opportunities they deserve.”

ASDEC also recognized Siena’s founder, **Erik Heyer**, with its annual award for “*Outstanding Leadership in Dyslexia Education*”. In making the award, ASDEC cited Mr. Heyer for “his vision and realization of a model school for high-achieving dyslexic students, and for his constant quest for excellence.”

“Dyslexic adults will talk about the frustration they felt attending schools where teachers didn’t understand their learning differences, and subsequently the sense of failure they often felt,” said ASDEC’s executive director, Jane Hanson. “Erik Heyer, in founding Siena School, and Jillian Darefsky, as an outstanding teacher, are doing their best to ensure that the students at Siena experience success, and not failure, by designing a curriculum and a school that addresses the gifts and strengths of students who learn differently.”

“We are both very honored by these awards, which we hope reflects the quality of the program we are building at The Siena School,” said Mr. Heyer. “We are incredibly fortunate to have Jilly as a member and leader of our faculty. Her abilities and accomplishments are representative of the exceptional quality we seek in our team members. We hope that Siena and its staff can continue to establish new benchmarks for excellence in dyslexia education.”

### **About The Siena School**

The Siena School is an outstanding new private school in Silver Spring, MD serving bright, college-bound students with language-based learning needs, such as dyslexia. Siena’s staff and board of advisors include distinguished national, State and local education leaders and professionals. The school opened September 2006 to serve students in grades 5 – 9, and will grow to serve grades 5 – 12 by 2009. Siena’s program is designed for students with mild to



moderate learning needs who are experiencing a discrepancy between their academic achievement and intellectual abilities in one or more areas such as reading, writing, oral expression or math. Siena delivers a highly unique and individualized educational program featuring small class sizes, research-based instructional methodologies, a highly trained staff and an educational environment uniquely designed to meet the needs of our students. For further information, The Siena School can be contacted at (301) 592-0567 or on the web at [www.thesienaschool.org](http://www.thesienaschool.org).

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