

Recognized leaders in the region, the two family-owned companies share many synergies as well as a sense of responsibility to the community. The powerful combination of Paradigm Benefits and Sylvia Group represents a strong client-focused alternative to large national companies with an impersonal approach. The combined entity will offer a strengthened service suite of personal and commercial insurance, employee benefits and financial services.

"Organizations today are faced with knitting together a patchwork of products and services to protect their companies and help attract and retain employees," Armstrong explained. "We offer a trusted one-stop resource who can manage and coordinate the many facets of insurance and financial services and offer expertise in a broad array of areas."

Besse brings deep knowledge in group health benefits with a focus in the large group (50-plus employees) market throughout her career. She founded Paradigm Benefits Group in 1998 and built a strong book of business while advocating for her clients. Previously she worked for Blue Cross and Blue Shield in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island, where she gained a hands-on knowledge of the underwriting process.

"I'm proud to affiliate with The Sylvia Group, and I look forward to helping them grow. I know our partnership will benefit employer groups throughout the area as they face increasing benefits complexity and regulation," Besse said. "I can now offer clients more services and support, and we've been working to make this transition seamless."

MASS REHABILITATION COMMISSIONER TO WIN EASTER SEALS AWARD

Easter Seals will present its prestigious Empowerment Award on June 18 to Commissioner Charles Carr of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. Carr is being honored for his commitment to empowering youth with disabilities.

The award reflects Easter Seals' mission of ensuring that children and adults with disabilities have equal opportunities to live, learn, work and play. Carr was singled out to receive the Empowerment Award in the "Learn" category.

In announcing Carr's award, Easter Seals President Kirk Joslin cited the commissioner's efforts to establish a curriculum in Massachusetts public

schools that will teach all students about the fight for disability rights. The curriculum also will help students with disabilities understand their place in the disability rights movement and develop a sense of pride and empowerment.

"Charlie Carr has been an indispensable partner of Easter Seals through the years," Joslin said. "In addition to championing the disability rights curriculum, he was instrumental in creating the Easter Seals Youth Leadership Network, which helps youth with disabilities develop the self-confidence and skills they will need to succeed in life. He has expanded the horizons of countless young men and women with disabilities."

As an advocate, manager and public policy leader, Carr has dedicated his career to advancing independence for people with disabilities through social and economic policies and programs. He also is a nationally recognized leader in the independent living movement.

Easter Seals will present the Empowerment Awards in a ceremony at the organization's Evening of Empowerment gala at the State Room, 60 State St., Boston.

LOCAL ATTORNEYS RECEIVE FIRST JUSTICES' AWARD



Congratulations to Attorney **Dave Dennis** and Attorney **Richard Urban**, who were honored at a ceremony last night to receive the First Justices' Award for Pro Bono Publico Excellence. The award recognizes their outstanding commitment to pro bono public legal assistance of providing access to justice for poor and low-income individuals across Southeastern Massachusetts. Each year many attorneys volunteer numerous hours to represent clients who do not have the resources to hire a private attorney. The attorneys volunteer their time and expertise to ensure that residents have access to the legal and justice system.