

his speeches. He's a pretty good orator. When he gets up to make a forceful speech, he reminds you of a revival preacher. He's pretty eloquent in getting his points across."

Ford's political acumen and communication skills were evident at the beginning of his political career in 1981. He was already established in his native Rockcastle County, where his grandfather had been county judge and his family operated a variety of businesses, including Ford Brothers Inc., an auction and real-estate company that also has an office in Pulaski County, a part of which comprises the 80th District.

If he was going to win the seat in his first run for political office, Ford figured he needed to step outside of his comfort zone. He spent little time campaigning in Rockcastle and Pulaski, focusing his effort almost entirely on Lincoln County, where he was virtually unknown.

Daly Reed, a soil conservation agent who died in 1989, greased Ford's path in Lincoln County. The two had only met briefly the year before at a Republican function but formed an alliance that Ford credits with launching his political career.

"We just hit it off. We went door-to-door, from 8 in the morning to 8 at night," Ford recalled of that first campaign with Daly. "He knew everybody and their family tree. When he'd introduce me, he'd say, 'This is Danny Ford, my adopted son.'"

Ford carried Lincoln County that year and has been nearly unchallenged ever since. Of 30 primary and general elections that have passed since he first took office, Ford has only faced opposition four times and only once failed to win Lincoln. That was in 2002, when Stanford attorney Paul Long won the battle on his home turf but couldn't overcome Ford in Rockcastle and Pulaski.

"I've been very fortunate," he said.

During the ensuing years in Frankfort, Ford said he took most of his cues on bills to sponsor from people and events in his district. He recalled a devastating crash that claimed two lives in Rockcastle County when a man who had been arrested for a DUI climbed over the backseat and commandeered a state trooper's cruiser and drove it the wrong way on Interstate 75. That led to legislation requiring all law-enforcement vehicles to be equipped with cages, he said.

In the current session, Ford is sponsoring a bill to outlaw the sale of so called "bath salts," potent amphetamine powders that people inhale to get high and thus often end up in the hospital. Varieties of the product have been legally sold at D&M Market in Crab Orchard and other places around the state.

"I've got a number of calls from Lincoln County that a lot of kids are fooling with it," he said.

Ford is also pushing a bill that will make products containing pseudoephedrine available by prescription only as a way to curtail the state's epidemic methamphetamine abuse. He is dead-set against a ballot measure to amend the constitution to allow gambling.

"I would hate to see our state revenue based on something so volatile," he said of the expanded gaming issue. "I'm very concerned about the kind of influences that will be trying to pass this thing."

Taking a stance against gambling is right up Ford's alley. He doesn't shy away from the socially conservative hot-button battles against gambling, abortion, and gay marriage. His front-and-center role in creating a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage and civil unions in Kentucky, which was approved overwhelmingly by voters in 2004, was the most intense experience in Frankfort, he said.

"I was at the forefront of that issue; I was really pushing for it. I was called a right-wing radical, a homophobe," he recalled. "But I'm comfortable standing up for what I believe in."

Representative Mike Harmon from the neighboring 54th District that covers Boyle County said Ford's values, experience and ability to work both sides of the aisle will be missed.

"Danny's a great guy, very conservative," Harmon said. "He fought for whatever concerned his district, whether it was roads or water or whatever. He could probably have easily won his new district. He was very well liked. There's always going to be some challenges when you're in the minority, but I think that he was respected by both sides."

Ford said patience and a willingness to compromise are necessary traits to be an effective legislator. It's important not to commit to a position too soon, before understanding both sides, he said, and sometimes it's a long road to seeing a project completed.

As an example, Ford said the improvements to U.S. 150 from Stanford to Mount Vernon began during Wallace Wilkinson's administration in the late 1980s. "They said they were going to start it in Stanford, and I said I didn't care where we started as long as we got it done. And we've just now gotten it finished."

Of all the governors he served under, Ford said he had the most trouble with Wilkinson, the Casey County upstart who surprised a field of better known Democrats in 1987. It was Wilkinson's political strategist, James Carville, who later went on to national fame as the architect behind Bill Clinton's two runs for the presidency, who made Ford uneasy.

"I never established much of a relationship with Governor Wilkinson, but that was probably because I did not like James Carville one bit," Ford said. "He was the most wicked man I've ever been around in my life."

Ford arrived in Frankfort at the end of John Y. Brown's term. Things have changed considerably since then, he said.

"It was much more of a partying institution back then, a lot of drinking and carousing and card playing. The legislature is more sober-minded now, more conscientious about doing its job."

He credited Martha Layne Collins for Toyota, "an industry that changed this state forever." Of Brereton Jones, Ford said, "He was a straight shooter." He described Paul Patton as "very sincere. Nobody treated me more fair." Ernie Fletcher, the only Republican, "tried to help and got some good things done," but was handcuffed by his minority status. Beshear "has been good to work with," Ford said.

After finishing this session and a possible special session, Ford, who will be 60 in April, said he is looking forward to working full-time with his son in the real estate and auction business. His 30 years in the legislature have earned him an annual pension of about \$40,700, slightly less than his highest salary as a representative—\$41,039—which he is being paid this year, according to the Kentucky Legislators Retirement Plan.

He has no plans on getting involved in choosing his successor in the 80th District, though he said he will support someone who shares his conservative ideals if such a candidate emerges.

When asked what advice for a long political career he might whisper in the ear of the person who takes his place, Ford kept it simple, in keeping with his style.

"Be attentive and be accessible. I came into this with the attitude of making sure I listened to what people had to say, and now that I've been up here and experienced the

legislative process all these years, it's made me more that way than ever. Just be accessible and available and listen."

RECOGNIZING THE HIGHLANDS CENTER FOR AUTISM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to an innovative, beneficial, and truly essential organization in a quest to better understand and serve fellow Kentuckians diagnosed with autism: the Highlands Center for Autism in Prestonsburg, Kentucky.

The Highlands Center for Autism is making great progress in an attempt to better comprehend the extent of a condition which many people are unfamiliar with. Autism is a term used to describe complex developmental brain disorders that young children are most likely to show symptoms of during their first few years of life. The Centers for Disease Control has released a statistic that predicts 1 out of every 90 children will be diagnosed with autism. Not even 10 years ago, fewer people had ever heard of autism, and if they had, they probably didn't understand the full extent of it. Now with new cases being diagnosed each day, understanding autism is becoming increasingly more important.

Therefore, now more than ever, there is a need for contributions from organizations like the Highlands Center for Autism. The professional team at the Highlands Center uses the breakthrough Applied Behavior Analysis—ABA—method, which has been proven to dramatically reduce symptoms and improve life quality. Dr. Shelli Deskins of Paintsville, KY, has experience working with the ABA method. She previously worked with victims of post-traumatic stress disorder in Hazard, KY. Since her tenure began at the Highlands Center in January 2009, she has worked fervently to transform it into the successful organization it is today.

The truly one-of-a-kind Highlands Center is a private, year-round day school that serves as a beacon of hope and respite for the students enrolled and their families. The Center operates on the ideal that all children deserve the opportunity to laugh and play to become healthy, happy, and productive adults. The staff and volunteers provide an optimistic outlook for those enrolled, and provides their families with home visits and frequent reports on each child's daily progress.

I am honored to be able to have the opportunity to stand before my colleagues of the United States Senate and honor the tremendous work being done by the Highlands Center for Autism. It is inspiring to know that an institution involved with making scientific strides such as this is located in the great Commonwealth of Kentucky. I would like to thank those involved with the Highlands Center for Autism and congratulate them for their unparalleled dedication and service to this cause.

There was recently an article published in an eastern Kentucky magazine, the *Sentinel-Echo: Silver Edition*, which gave the public a glimpse into the groundbreaking work being done by the Highlands Center for Autism. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to appear in the RECORD as follows:

[From the *Sentinel-Echo: Silver Edition*, Nov. 2011]

HIGHLANDS CENTER FOR AUTISM

Kathy sits almost still at her desk as her teacher writes a word on an erasable pad, shows it to Kathy and says, "wagon." The 8-year-old little girl looks at the word and repeats, "wagon." "Good saying 'wagon!'" her teacher praises.

Five-year-old Jerry sways a bit back and forth, making noises his teacher doesn't understand. "Use your iPad to tell me what you want," she softly tells him. He points to icons on the device's screen and the words I WANT A DRINK OF WATER appear. "Good making a sentence!" she compliments.

Kathy and Jerry are students at the Highlands Center for Autism, and there is more than one amazing achievement going on here. It is amazing that Kathy is able to sit still and to read; it is amazing that Jerry is able to communicate his needs, and it is truly a miracle that the Center exists at all.

Autism is a term used to describe a group of complex developmental brain disorders that typically appear during the first three years of life. Very skilled professionals often can see autism signs as early as six months, but children are often not diagnosed until 12 to 18 months, and many times much later. Symptoms manifest a wide spectrum of behaviors impacting development of social interaction and communication skills. Every individual is affected differently. Many need to be taught what most people consider basic behaviors—nodding yes or no, making eye contact, eating with utensils, playing, potty training.

As recently as 10 years ago, the majority of people were completely unaware of the condition. Today, however, public awareness has risen as more children are being diagnosed, dramatically increasing the number of affected families. According to the Centers for Disease Control, one out of every 90 children will be diagnosed with autism. There is no known cause or cure, and children do not "outgrow" it, but research has shown that early intervention using Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) has a dramatic impact on reducing symptoms and improving life quality.

A major problem with achieving that crucial early intervention is a lack of facilities providing help, especially in communities outside major metropolitan areas. Even getting into a diagnostic program can take a year or longer. Many families who can afford it move near a treatment center in order to get help for their children.

In early 2008, a group of local families approached Highlands Health System with the idea of forming a partnership to establish a local center for ABA treatment for their children who had been diagnosed with autism. They had been primarily on their own, searching first for a diagnosis of what was happening to their children and then, after diagnosis, seeking treatment. They knew that ABA is a proven, evidence-based treatment with decades of solid scientific research supporting its effectiveness.

After their meeting with the parents and additional research revealing that a re-

search-based program specifically for children diagnosed with autism did not exist anywhere in or near Kentucky, Highlands was prompted to move toward fulfilling this need. Their research also indicated that the Cleveland (Ohio) Clinic Center for Autism offered one of the most prestigious treatment programs in the country. After a visit to the Clinic by a group of representatives, Highlands was ready to work towards establishing the first program of its kind in Kentucky.

A community meeting revealed an astonishing amount of support from local families, schools, health departments, social-service agencies and government officials, leading to Highlands entering into a consulting agreement in September of 2008 with the Cleveland Center for Autism to work toward the goal of "mirroring" Cleveland's program in Prestonsburg.

Highlands owned an apartment building near the hospital which became the Center's facility. Next began the search for a director for the program. Another one of those "miracles" happened when they found Dr. Shelli Deskins, a Paintsville native who was working in Hazard treating children with post-traumatic stress disorder and who had an impressive educational background and experience in ABA.

Dr. Deskins was approached by the hospital in November of '08. She began at Highlands in January of '09 as the Center's only employee and with her office in a former elevator shaft in the main hospital building! Aided by Karen Sellers, assistant to Highlands's president, Dr. Deskins set about creating the Center for Autism. She did everything from helping with facility renovation, writing and establishing procedures, ordering supplies, interviewing and hiring staff, finding children anything necessary to create an outstanding and one-of-its-kind, facility-based treatment center. Even though she was already trained in ABA and had a doctoral degree, she also spent six weeks at Cleveland's Center to thoroughly absorb their program's procedures.

From the beginning, Dr. Deskins and Highlands have insisted that the Center be "The Best," with no shortcuts or cutting corners. The original staff went to the Cleveland Clinic for two weeks to train in the Clinic's methods and learn their procedures, and Cleveland staff members followed them back to Prestonsburg to help open the Center. The Highlands Center staff continues with follow-up training periodically. The children at Highlands receive one-on-one attention from the highly trained and dedicated instructors. Dr. Deskins says staff members know very quickly if working with children diagnosed with autism is something they want to do.

The Center for Autism is a private, year-round day school and has seven students enrolled at this time, but expects to be at their capacity of 10 by summer. Currently, the children range in age from 3 to 14, and include students whose families have moved here from Alabama, Virginia, and Texas.

The Highlands Center is not a place where you can drop off your child to be "fixed" it requires total commitment from the parents. Home visits are made by Dr. Deskins and each child has a data book recording daily progress. Home communication notes are sent home on a daily basis.

The Center is guided by the principle that all children deserve the opportunity to laugh and play and to become healthy, happy, and productive adults. The Highlands Center for Autism is well on its way to becoming a regional and national resource for the diagnosis and treatment of children with autism.

REMEMBERING STACEY SACHS

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, at its best, the Senate is an extended family—we spend an unbelievable amount of time working here, Senator to Senator, staff to staff. And in the course of those efforts, we get to know each other not as members of a party or as ideological caricatures or cutouts but as people. In particular, we get to know and appreciate on a personal level not just our staff but the staffs of our State delegations. There are staffers from the Massachusetts delegation who have been here as long as I have. And certainly on my late colleague Ted Kennedy's staff there were professionals I knew as friends and turned to as easily as Teddy himself did for so many years.

That is why I know Ted himself would be here this morning doing what I am doing in his place, which is acknowledging with sadness the passing on Saturday, April 21 of Stacey Sachs—a longtime health care staffer for Ted—whom we lost to complications from a hard-fought battle with cancer. Stacey was just 50 years old.

For many of us, Stacey was a steady and unchanging sight in this ever-changing institution. She spent more than a decade on Capitol Hill as senior health counsel on the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, HELP, Committee. She came to the Hill to play a role in making universal health care reform a reality; her life's work—as it was for Ted—is a legacy she leaves behind that should be a gift to last.

But it is not her only legacy. Over the years, I came to know Stacey, and I came to know firsthand so much of what impressed and inspired her friends and her colleagues: her health care expertise, her honesty, and her dedication. She devoted her career to making sure Americans had access to health care coverage. It was that simple. For her, that work was personal. It was not statistics or spreadsheets or the arcane minutiae of legislation. For Stacey, she cared first and foremost about the effect public policy has on everyday Americans, and she touched the lives of countless people who never met her. But every American, in part, can thank her for real changes that made their lives better.

I am not just talking about legislation, but I could be. Stacey's outsized role in the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 and the recently enacted Affordable Care Act of 2010 were just two examples of the ways she focused and made a real difference on a wide range of issues during her time on the HELP Committee. She worked on Medicare prescription drugs, Medicare reimbursement, health insurance coverage and reimbursement, Medicaid, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, and the Employee Retirement Income Security Act. In each instance and every effort, Stacey brought to the task at hand not just her policy expertise but her compassion and professionalism. The same could be said about an effort that came