

Mrs. Ryan has been a champion for Illinois' children throughout her public career but really made her mark for them while First Lady.

Mrs. Ryan has always had a passion for helping people, especially children and families. She has been a tireless advocate for alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention for over 30 years. The Lura Lynn Ryan Prevention Library is named after Illinois' First Lady in honor of her many years of dedicated work to promote prevention practices in the state and nationally.

The library is housed at Prevention First in Chicago and has established itself as the primary source for substance abuse prevention materials and resources in Illinois. It offers the largest specialty collection of substance abuse prevention and related materials in the state and regionally.

The Illinois Department of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse has honored her for her work in prevention. In 1989, Mrs. Ryan was named a delegate to the Illinois Assembly on the Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse. She has been honored for the Hopedale Medical Complex for her prevention work with Illinois' seniors and is a recipient of the McDermott Humanitarian Award and the TASC Leadership Award.

Additionally, Mrs. Ryan has served on the board of directors for the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana.

As First Lady, she created Futures for Kids. She felt strongly that Illinois needed to integrate the latest research into programs funded by the state so she included the top prevention researchers in Illinois in the process. She also included advocates, state agency directors and others to make sure that everyone was on the same page and providing quality programs for children that made sense. Through Futures she created Be Real, a statewide anti-drug campaign aimed at showcasing that the majority of kids don't do drugs or drink and they should be the focus of our efforts. She created new opportunities for kids in need of academic support and after school care by expanding Teen Reach exponentially.

She hosted the first ever Teen Summit at the Executive Mansion to hear first-hand the issues that teens face and what messages they felt would resonate to prevent them from using and abusing drugs.

One of her greatest legacies to the children of Illinois, was her work in creating Universal Pre-School and the state financing for the early stages of the program. In her capacity as Chair of Futures for Kids, she brought together the leading academic minds in early childhood education, parents, caregivers, educators, state agencies to create a multi-pronged framework for implementing Universal Pre-School. This framework laid the foundation for future work in this area and ultimately the creation of Pre-School for all.

Besides Mrs. Ryan's dedication to the children of Illinois, she was a tireless advocate for the arts in Illinois. She loved the Mansion and was passionate about passing on the history to the next generation by co-authoring the book "At Home with Illinois' Governors: A Social History of the Illinois Executive Mansion, 1855-2003." The book chronicles the history of the mansion through the families who have called it home over the years.

She loved to mix Illinois' rich history with her love of the arts. She was honored to promote and be a part of "History from the Heart: Quilt Paths Across Illinois." Through the pages of the book, 200 years of Illinois' quilt making history unfolds.

Additionally, Mrs. Ryan created the first ever "Made in Illinois" catalogue which not only highlighted Illinois' many talented artisans, but created an opportunity for them to reach a larger audience and promote the purchase of Illinois' craft around the world. The book was also a way to highlight Illinois' many tourist destinations.

Finally, she may be best remembered for her establishment of an Artisan Village at the Illinois State Fair. The Village featured Illinois' leading artisans and included demonstrations and items for purchase.

In keeping with her strong desire to preserve Illinois rich history, Mrs. Ryan was the chair of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum Board of Directors and the driving force behind securing the financial resources to building a world class museum for Illinois' favorite son. Given her love for children, Mrs. Ryan created a playroom for children to play games that the Lincoln children may have played, dress in period clothing and learn about living in the time period. Mrs. Lincoln's Attic is a favorite destination for children visiting the museum.

Mrs. Ryan also served as a member of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission which was established by Congress to celebrate the life and legacy of Lincoln while reinvigorating his thoughts, ideals and spirit across the nation and nationally.

Most of all, Mrs. Ryan is remembered by those whose lives she so graciously touched. She never was too busy to stop and say hello to someone and reach out a helping hand to those in need.