

Pam Barrett

Q: Why did Eloise Lewis feel that Hospice was so important?

Give me a minute...

Eloise Lewis was quite passionate about Hospice. And I think for her, Hospice represented the values of nursing, caring and compassion.

Q: What was her contribution to Hospice of Greensboro?

Well, I was very, very fortunate to be coming to Greensboro in 1985, which was about the time she was retiring and she had a lot of energy and enthusiasm for what we were building here in Greensboro. And so for me, she really became a mentor and a cheerleader for what we were doing in Greensboro. When I came we were in the basement, one room of the public health department. And then we have grown to a very comprehensive program over the last 17 years now. And she's been there every step of the way. She helped us with major capital campaigns, to help us have the first in-patient Hospice unit in NC. And then we had the first Hospice-oriented grief counseling center, the first children's-oriented Hospice grief counseling center, and also the first AIDS-focused residence for Hospice patients in the state. And each step along the way, she was an encourager and a cheerleader and was very supportive philosophically of what we were doing.

Q: How did Lewis become involved with Hospice?

When Dr. Lewis was at UNCG in the school of nursing as the dean, some folks in the community asked her if she would help really begin the Hospice program here. And she actually chaired one of the taskforces that helped begin to put the policies into place, and to help the volunteer program being, and to really provide some leadership in the early stages of this organization's development.

Q: So she didn't stop working for nursing after retirement?

I want to do that, but there's a couple of other things I meant to say on your first question that I'd like to try to go back. I'd like to try to go back and just say a ...

Eloise Lewis was so very committed to Hospice's mission because, I think, for her, the values of nursing were represented in the caring and compassion, but also she really understood and was...but also, she really understood and appreciated the holistic and the spiritual dimensions of Hospice because of who she was. I also want to say something else here...

It was really our agency's good fortune, and my good fortune, that Eloise's retirement coincided with when I came in January of '85 as the first organization director. And she had a lot of energy and a lot of passion for what we were doing. And so she was a member of the board and really gave a lot of her time and energy and effort. It was like another career after retirement to be a volunteer and to really help our organization develop, and to become a model program for Hospice across the state.

Q: Could you talk about her role in developing the volunteer program?

In the very early days, Hospice was very volunteer driven. There was one part-time nurse and one part-time social worker on staff, so it was very important to initiate a volunteer program that would support this growing mission and program in our community. And Eloise was able to help develop some of the policies and procedures and protocols that would be used in nursing, in the home, at the bedside, and was very supportive of the volunteer program because that was how we were able to really grow in those early days. We had a lot of volunteers who were nurses, in fact, as well as other professional disciplines – clergy, and social workers and the like, as well as lay volunteers. And the heart and kind of spirit of Hospice is interdisciplinary care. And Eloise really understood that interdisciplinary care as a value of Hospice, but also reflective of nursing as well.

Q: How did Gene Tranbarger and Eloise work together for Hospice?

Gene Tranbarger was one of the early president's of our board. And I think he and Eloise had a real special relationship and they work together to make some advances for Hospice here. For example, Gene was Vice-President for Nursing at the Moses-Cone Hospital when we wanted to open a Hospice unit there. And Eloise and Gene helped form a taskforce so we could talk about what would be needed and how we would develop this program.

Q: Again because of noise.

Gene Tranbarger was one of the early board presidents here. And he and Eloise worked closely together in the development of the Hospice-based unit at Moses-Cone Hospital. They had a real special relationship and were able to work together on the taskforce when we decided we wanted to have the hospital-based Hospice unit here when he was Vice-President for Nursing. He actually encouraged a joint venture between our Hospice and the health system and it's been very, very positive.

Q: What awards did Lewis receive for her work?

Eloise Lewis has received a number of awards. But in Hospice circles, there were several that we nominated her for and that she received. She received the Peter Keys award, which is the highest award in NC for participation and leadership in the development of Hospice. And that was I'm not sure how many years ago, but the Peter Keys award was a state award. And then we also nominated her for a national award for the National Hospice Foundation as one of the volunteer leaders in organizational development and she received that several years ago. And that was a real honor and something she was very proud of. I remember she was sick, very sick, when she was supposed to be given that award, she had a terrible cold, but she and her housemate flew out to Texas and she received it at the same time one of our staff members was receiving a national award in the clinical care-giving area. So we had a really, really proud day.

Q: Do you have any favorite Lewis stories?

Well, I think one of my favorite stories about Eloise Lewis, and this would be a kind of late one in that we were talking about doing the children's program. We were developing

not only a model program, but a facility which was quite unique. A Kidspath grief counseling center for children. And she got so excited and she said, 'Oh, they've got to do it for the little people!' And she was so encouraging to be able to have us move in a new direction, a broadened always supporting the broader vision, and encouraging other people on the board and the community to support it as well.

Q: What kind of person does it take to be a Hospice nurse?

A Hospice nurse has to have a lot of patience. You think about compassion and caring which are certainly true, but patience, sensitivity, the ability to listen, and also to be able to work effectively with the other disciplines because we value interdisciplinary care so much. And I think Eloise really understood and appreciated the interdisciplinary and the holistic and the spiritual dimensions of Hospice because of who she was.

Q: What do Hospice nurses do?

Hospice nurses, hospice nurses, hospice nurses work in a variety of settings. They may provide care at the bedside because most patients want to be in their own homes and our nurses enable them to be able to stay at home, come and counsel with them about their medicine, their symptoms they may be having and special needs to be able to make that time a special time. Hospice nurses may also work in our residential Hospice environment for example. And Hospice nurses may be in the inpatient environment as well trying to deal with acute symptom management, pain issues and that kind of thing.

Q: Repeat the first question because of truck noise, please.

Eloise Lewis was so committed to Hospice's mission. For her, I think Hospice represented the values of nursing – care and compassion. But also, she really understood and appreciated the interdisciplinary care we provide. She also really understood and appreciated the spiritual dimension of Hospice because of who she was.

Eloise Lewis made so many contributions to our agency, they're just innumerable. She came to be involved at the time when we were just beginning. And she really was able to stay with us for a long period of time in the organization development. She was an inspiration to all the other board members that she worked with, even to the staff, to the volunteers, to the nurses because she cared so much and because she was so philosophically committed to what it was that Hospice is all about. It was sort of part of who she became. And I think it was a wonderful tribute to her career that she was able to spend so much of her time and her energy after retirement being able to make a difference. And making a difference was very, very important to Eloise.

Q: Could you talk again about your humble beginnings?

We began in one room in the public health department basement in donated space, no windows. And from that, we were able to really grow to become a comprehensive ... We began in one room of the public health department basement, in one room, no windows. We were able to develop into a comprehensive Hospice program and fortunately Eloise was with us every step along the way, usually on the Board of Directors. She served two terms and in fact, when she had to rotate off, we put her to work chairing the capital campaign and then brought her back on the board again. So, Eloise was instrumental in

helping us develop each step along the way to become a comprehensive program from one room in the health department basement to the campus that we have today. We were able to develop the first inpatient Hospice unit in NC with her support and assistance. We were also able to develop the first grief counseling center attached to a Hospice and the first pediatric-focused grief counseling center as well as the first AIDS-focused Hospice residence. And each step along the way, Eloise was with us encouraging and supporting and helping us know that we could meet the next challenge, that we could achieve our vision.

Eloise Lewis helped us so much from our humble beginnings in the public health department basement, where we had one room, no windows to the program we've become which is very comprehensive. We have a campus now with 3 facilities. She had a lot of vision and Eloise helped inspire those on the board, those of us on the staff who were doing a lot of the work to keep going to try to really achieve our greatest vision. And it really has been our vision that no one should die alone, in pain, or without hope. And these are the values that have inspired us and she's always been one of our greatest cheerleaders.

We were able to develop the first inpatient Hospice unit in NC a long time ago. I'm going to start again. We were able to develop the first inpatient Hospice unit in NC, the first Hospice-connected grief counseling center in the state, the first pediatric child-focused grief center and also the first AIDS priority Hospice residential facility in NC.

Q: Do you have any stories about Eloise's sense of humor?

I don't remember her doing anything really crazy. But I do remember when she came on the board, she went with a group of staff in a retreat center in Canuga, and she had always been known by a lot of the students, her students, who perhaps were nurses for us, as Dean Lewis, Dr. Lewis. And she had, of course, that long hair in a bun in the back of her head and so forth. And the first night that they were all together in Canuga and she unwinds her hair, I remember the nurses saying, 'Oh, I can't believe we were with Dean Lewis!' But, she just became part of us, she appreciated who we were, we loved her dearly and she inspired all of us, and she continues to inspire us. We think about her, we talk about her. We have many of her angels around our facilities and we are just so indebted to her care and her compassion and her vision and her support of our program.