

Dear Palliative Care community,

We are sad to announce the death of our dear friend, colleague and mentor, Kappy Flanders. Please see the message below from Bernard J. Lapointe, M.D., the Eric M. Flanders Chair in Palliative Medicine.



Photo courtesy of Owen Egan, McGill University

The Palliative Care Community at McGill, across the country and around the world, mourns the loss of a remarkable leader and activist, a formidable volunteer for the cause of quality end of life care and a compassionate and genuine mentor for many of us, as well as a generous philanthropist. It is with profound sadness that I share with you that Kappy Flanders died peacefully at home yesterday surrounded by her three daughters, Susan, Judith and Elle. She was 81 years old.

Kappy Flanders was introduced to Palliative Care a few years after the death of her husband Eric, when her mother was dying in Israel. There she witnessed the strengths of palliative care and had first-hand experience of its whole person care approach. She returned to Montreal determined that every family should know about, and have access to, palliative care. She went to McGill University and suggested that there should be an endowed Chair in palliative medicine. The Eric M. Flanders Chair in Palliative Medicine was thus created - the first Chair in palliative medicine in North America, which was attributed to Dr. Balfour Mount. She also was instrumental in partnering with Dean Richard Cruess to create the McGill Council on Palliative Care, a not-for-profit community-based organization focused on increasing public awareness of and support for palliative care, as well as its availability within and beyond the McGill community.

At the same time, Kappy became instrumental in the development of the Canadian Palliative Care Initiative, a blueprint for enhancing research, scholarship, and the promotion of a standardized system for palliative care across the country.

Kappy was a connector, bringing together volunteers, professionals, intellectuals, artists and leaders, all around the cause of quality end-of-life care. This quality was particularly evident in the realization, in partnership with Suzanne O'Brien, of Projection Week, a unique initiative that took place across Montreal last October.

Projection Week was a unique opportunity for Montrealers to harness the power of creativity to explore major questions about life and death, from different points of view and disciplines - philosophical, medical,

social, artistic and educational. This event was exceptionally successful, and Kappy was already planning a second edition for the Fall of 2021 in partnership with the Council on Palliative Care and McGill University.

Kappy has also contributed significantly, as member of its organizing committee, to the continuous success of the International Congress on palliative care organized every two years by McGill since 1976.

Earlier this Spring, I remember conversations with her around the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the inhumane way too many were dying without having had the opportunity to choose how they would die, whether or not they would accept ventilation, intensive care or would prefer comfort measures. The violence of the pandemic and the degree of suffering it brought about fueled her wish to better communicate about advance care planning at end-of-life and also to further contribute to enable patients and their loved ones to ensure their choices are respected and the care they need is available.

Kappy had many achievements. In recognition of her contributions to the community, particularly through the creation of the McGill Council on Palliative Care, she was awarded the Governor-General's Meritorious Service Medal in 2003.

Kappy also sat on McGill's Board of Governors from 1998 to 2007. In 2009, the University recognized her tremendous contributions by awarding her with an honorary Doctorate of Laws, the institution's highest honour.

In 2015, she was named a member of the Order of Canada.

Kappy's death represents a profound loss for many of us who benefited from her guidance, her support and her friendship. She will be sorely missed.

On behalf of the Palliative Care McGill Community I would like to express our most sincere sympathy to her children Susan, Judith, Steven and Elle, her friends and her family.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be no shiva. A memorial service in Montreal will be announced at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Council on Palliative Care will be appreciated.

For further information about the extraordinary life of Kappy, please visit the Palliative Care McGill website:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/palliativecare/portraits-0/kappy-flanders>

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