

In Memoriam



Ellen Louise Dailey
1947 - 2006

Ellen Louise Dailey

Ellen Dailey's kind and commanding presence inspired and moved people throughout the country. When we announced her passing to the national Health Care for the Homeless constituency, words of grief and tribute and blessing came pouring in. The respect and love that countless people have for Ellen are reflected in the words printed here.

Ellen worked for justice. May she rest in peace.

John Lozier
Executive Director, National Health Care for the Homeless Council
Nashville, Tennessee

I have known Ellen for twelve-plus years. In a word, she was a force. I knew her as a consumer and as a chair of our Consumer Board and as vice president of our Board of Directors and on the National CAB. She is/was a remarkable person; so gifted and passionate. I will miss Ellen mostly as a friend though.

Barry Bock
Director of Clinical Operations, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program
Boston, Massachusetts

Lost an amazing spirit here on earth, gained an amazing ally in heaven!
Ellen is a spirit that we run across a very few times
she is not a category
she is not a client
she is Ellen...and she WILL be watching over us
Guarantee it

Paul Boden
Director, Western Region Advocacy Project
San Francisco, California



I most remember her at the rally last year in front of the White House in DC and being moved by her words. She will be missed.

Erin Cobb
VA Medical Center
Charleston, South Carolina

I first met Ellen in 2001 at a meeting that the National HCH Council and Bureau of Primary Health Care had asked the consumers to hold. We were to come together to form a national group of consumers to give advice to them. Ellen was elected as one of the Co-chairs and I was elected Secretary. That first year we had a lot of work to do. We needed to start with a mission statement and vision statement. Ellen immediately got to work on these. In a matter of a short time we had these--the only thing the others of us had to do was to check for typos etc. They said exactly what needed to be said. Then Ellen decided that we needed a how to book on how to start and run local CABs. Again, Ellen got to work and produced The Manual and again all we had to do was to check for typos and stuff.

Over these past few years I have learned a lot about myself, thanks to Ellen. She taught me that I am somebody and that I have something to say concerning health care for the homeless.

Through Ellen's courage and dignity I have learned to accept myself for who I am not what someone else wants me to be. She taught me that no matter where I have been the important thing is where I am going and how I am getting there.



If it was not for Ellen I would not be where I am today. She encouraged me to open my mouth when I saw something that I thought was wrong. She encouraged me to move up the ranks on NCAB. She encouraged me to walk with a dignity that I some times did not feel I had the right to.

Ellen was a good friend to me and she will sorely be missed by me and all the other consumers and staff who have had the pleasure to meet her.

*Sarah Davidson
Chair, National Consumer Advisory Board
San Antonio, Texas*

Friends, my name is Gilbert DeBarros and I didn't know Ellen at all. But her presence at the conference in Portland was so evident. I knew I was in the presence of a proud African/Native American woman. That moment will be remembered as well as she. God Bless her spirit and He holds her close.

*Gilbert DeBarros
Treasurer, Board of Directors, Generations Family Health Center
Norwich, Connecticut*

I am deeply saddened by this news but also celebrate Ellen's brave and wonderful life to be the voice for those who could not speak for themselves. A HUGE loss for our greater community but we are all the better in our work and lives because of Ellen. Thank you Ellen - may you walk in the peace and glory of God today...

*Mark Douglas
Gennesaret Free Clinic
Indianapolis, Indiana*

We, of the National Consumer Advisory Board (NCAB), will surely miss one of our original members and pioneers. Ellen welcomed me, Richard Drain at my first Health Care for the Homeless conference, some years ago. Her honesty, open-mindedness and willingness won me over. I surrendered to NCAB'S process of self-help. I will always honor her. Ellen opened doors that no one can close and shut doors that would not allow persons with Behavioral Health Issues to enter. Her memory and work live on in each of us who wish to champion her call to freedom from our self made prisons, "called I can't".



Richard Drain
Department of Behavioral Health/Mental Retardation Services
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

I first met Ellen three years ago at the Health Care for the Homeless Conference in New Orleans. It was my first HCH conference, and I really didn't know what to expect. I knew I needed to attend some Consumer events as a condition of me receiving a scholarship to attend. From the first time I met Ellen on that first day of the conference I immediately felt her motherly warmth, as if she was taking me under her wing.

Over the last three years I have come to admire and respect Ellen; she was smart and compassionate to all people, and most of all she was real. She didn't like injustice and wasn't afraid to let people know how she felt. She was someone; she was my dear friend.

For the week that we were in Portland, Ellen, Sarah, Ulysses and I spent a great deal of time together; talking about the days ahead for NCAB, about our excitement for it's future, but we also talked about how much we meant to each other. I'm so blessed to have had that time with her. I'm a better person having known her.

I'll love and miss her always.

Amy Grassette
Co-Chair, National Consumer Advisory Board
Worcester, Massachusetts

May her soul rest in peace and guide us in our work and mission.

Adi Gundlapalli, MD
Salt Lake City, Utah

I've been struggling find the words to express my sadness over Ellen's death. I wasn't lucky enough to have known her as well as you, but I was so fond of her and loved catching up with her every year. In Portland she told me about the new surgery and/or medication option she was deciding between – from her manner, I didn't even consider she might not make it. She was an amazingly strong, bright, woman whose death will sadden many of us — I'm sure especially those whose lives she helped improve.

*Nancy Hallock
National HCH Conference Coordinator, Policy Research Associates
Delmar, New York*



This is, indeed, sad news. I am so glad that I got to spend a little time with her again in Portland. It was always a pleasure to visit with her. I will remember her strength and her spirit and I will pass this along.

*Monte Hanks
Fourth Street Clinic
Salt Lake City, Utah*

Thank you Ellen for all you've given to us. When life dealt you a bunch of lemons through becoming homeless, you made lemonade out of them and created the National Consumers' Advisory Board. You used your experience and your organizing skills to be sure that homeless persons would always have a voice in their health care services and would be treated with respect and dignity. You were a great spokesperson for the benefits of Respite Care and especially encouraged me to get a CAB started at Interfaith House. In Portland you took Jerry Felton, our ICAB President, under your wing and taught him so much in three short days about how to move forward with his fledgling organization. He really connected with you and was looking forward to your continued advice and counsel. Your spirit, commitment, courage, wonderful sense of humor and your "get it done" drive will live on in the many CABs around the country. You are a role model for all of us. Your life has made a difference to so many of us and we thank you for sharing yourself so unselfishly.

*Nancy Hanson
Respite Care Providers' Network
Chicago, Illinois*



When I went to my first conference in New Orleans, I was very nervous and wondered if I was over my head. When I attended the consumer meeting and Ellen spoke, she made me feel like I can do anything and she gave me the strength to continue on. I currently am the Chairperson for the Memphis Health Center Consumer Advisory Committee.

God needed another fantastic Angel by his side . . . so the Angel that was on Earth to help all of us had to leave. She will be greatly missed but this will push me to do a little bit better in Ms. Ellen Dailey's memory.

Glenise Hildahl
Memphis, Tennessee

During my last conversation with Ellen, at breakfast on Saturday morning in Portland, she told me that she had decided to go ahead with the cardiac procedure recommended by her providers. It was clear she was displaying great courage, as she had on many occasions throughout the years that I have known her. Ellen's courage, like that of so many of the consumers whose "success stories" we have had to pleasure to observe, is a lesson for us all.

Jean Hochron
Director, Office of Minority and Special Populations, Bureau of Primary Health Care,
Health Resources and Services
Administration
Rockville, Maryland

Ellen was an inspiration to all of us.
May she rest in peace.

Vince Keane
Executive Director, Unity Health Care
Washington, DC



After I attended a very informative and enlightening conference, on Friday night, June 9, 2006, I was honored to meet Ellen. I am also a single, elderly homeless woman that can relate to some of her experiences. I was "SO" inspired and encouraged by her demeanor and presence and hope to carry her spirit and enthusiasm into the future of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. She will be dearly missed.

Marianne Malott
Member of the Steering Committee, National Consumer Advisory Board
Eugene, Oregon

Ms. Daley, you were an inspiration to all who encountered your presence. The beautiful smile that shined as the stars in the heavens and throughout the universe. A diva who glided like the clouds and the flowers that sent an aura of dignity along with strength. Your warm compassion and love for all told the story of the beautiful woman, mother, friend and leader that you were. May all of us who knew you continue pushing forward to end homelessness.
Love,

Paula Lewis
Baltimore, Maryland

Dear Friend, I don't know if you remember the first time we met, sat in the lobby in the hotel in Washington DC talking for hours, I knew we were going to be best of friends. We talked about the world's problems and how we were going to fix all of them hahahaha and then of course we had to get some sleep, but of course first thing the next morning we were back talking, little did I know I would be blessed to have such a wonderful friend like you.

You know in our talks I remember you talking about how Health Care for the Homeless saved your life; I never told you but you were the driving force behind me becoming so involved with NCAB. I will always remember your mothering ways, how you would walk into a room and just take charge. Ellen, I can only hope one day to be like you. I love you very much and will miss you. I remember all the things you have taught me. In addition, I will promise to pass them. Thank you,
Your Buddy Eugene



P.S. My Buddy will be missed. See You Later My Friend...

Ulysses Maner
Former Chair, National Consumer Advisory Board
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

We're stunned and quite saddened. We had the opportunity to connect with Ellen in Portland and she gave a boost to our inspiration and practical vision for a new AHCH commitment to meaningful consumer leadership. In fact, it was freshly back from her encouragement and framing that we were able to persuade our Board to vote formally to work toward 51% consumer representation over the next several years. That was just last Tuesday at our annual meeting, and was unprecedented.

Know that we're thinking of you at this time and of others fortunate to have been touched by her.

Jenny Metzler
Co-Executive Director, Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless
Albuquerque, New Mexico

We are still stunned and trying ever so hard to celebrate the wonder of Ellen's life rather than dwell so much on her loss. What a wonderfully complex and charismatic woman, so utterly devoted to giving voice to those who are so often ignored, and so completely fearless in pursuing that goal. I drove her home from the airport in Boston after the flight back from Portland last week, and she spent most of the time praising the members of the NCAB for their courage in working through so many challenges, and also mentioned how proud she was to go to the HCH meetings and see so many people devoted to excellence in the care of the poor and homeless. She was a pistol.



We will miss her terribly around here. I cannot tell you how blessed we were to have her in our midst for these past 15 years, and how much of a force she was in the development of our program here in Boston. We miss her terribly, and I still hear her booming voice whenever I dwell on our mission and direction! Thank you so much for all your support. Ellen found a true home with the NCAB and with all of you.

*Jim O'Connell, MD
President, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program
Boston, Massachusetts*

I met Ellen for the first time very briefly in Portland Oregon. I found Ellen to be a very special person. She took the time to help others. She developed the gifts that God gave her to help people. The world is a better place to live in because of Ellen.

*Russell Oliver
Hazard, Kentucky*

Ellen Dailey has a special place in the history of Camillus. In June 2004, Linda Mansfield, one of our consumers, met Ellen in New Orleans at the HCH conference. When Linda returned, she could not stop talking about Ellen and about establishing a CAB at Camillus. So we schemed and invited Ellen to assist us in creating our CAB. Her visit to Miami was one of the main highlights of that year. Ellen's clarity and unwavering vision in ensuring the representation of our consumers absolutely moved our entire Board of Directors. Our CAB began because of Ellen. On a personal note, Ellen had this magic that stopped me in my tracks, a very good thing. Ellen has forever left her spirit at Camillus and also with me. May she rest in peace.

*Alina Perez-Stable
Vice President, National Health Care for the Homeless Council
Executive Director, Camillus Health Concern
Miami, Florida*



She was truly inspirational.

*Brenda Proffitt
Director, HCH Clinicians' Network
Albuquerque, New Mexico*

Earnest woman . . . compassionate friend . . .
warm hugs . . . this is very sad.

*Marianne Savarese
Mobile Community Health Team
Manchester, New Hampshire*

I first encountered Ellen some years ago at a Federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to which we had both been invited. The subject was mainstreaming: how could people experiencing homelessness access the hundreds of billions of dollars spent by HHS. Ellen was a wonderfully clear voice amidst the bureaucratic cacophony. She

maintained that we could end homelessness if people had a right to the services they need, and if the barriers to accessing these services were abolished. Ellen spoke authoritatively; and was never shy to describe her own experiences, while relating them to the experiences of others and to the policies and practices that produced those experiences.

Later, Ellen became active with the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. Her clarity, passion, and compassion enriched our work, as they did her life. She is missed.

*Jeff Singer
Chair, Policy Committee, National Health Care for the Homeless Council
President & CEO, Health Care for the Homeless, Inc., Baltimore, Maryland*

Ellen was a strong woman, great inspiration and one of the most decent and humane human beings I have ever known.

*Michael Stoops
Executive Director
National Coalition for the Homeless
Washington, DC*



We were blessed to have known Ellen and to have learned from her.

Her legacy will live on.

*Susan Whitney
Bureau of Primary Health Care
Rockville, Maryland*

Ellen certainly made her mark on this earth, and if I know Ellen, she will make it in heaven as well, and the angels will be standing at attention. When I first met Ellen, as I began to support the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program Consumer Advisory Board, I found her to be gracious, stern, welcoming and very much serious about business, the mission of BHCHP and the CAB. Her presence was powerful, her devotion was immeasurable, and her heart was bigger than life. Ellen said what she meant and meant what she said; there was no mistake about that. There is a poem that refers to the short life of the Lily – even after it has died its fragrance lingers on in everything it has touched.....Ellen has touched us all in many different ways and her spirit will live on through us.

I feel so blessed that I met her, worked with her and became friends with her! I will miss her very much!

*Barbara Donahue
Executive Assistant
Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program
Boston, Massachusetts*



Bob Taube's nomination of Ellen for her 2004 Joseph M. Smith Award from the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers:

Ellen Dailey is the Chair of the Consumer Advisory Board of the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program and is a powerful and articulate advocate for access to health care for homeless people.



Homeless men, women and children have great need for a voice to relate their concerns to the broader community, and Ellen has proved herself to be an eloquent spokeswoman on their behalf. Her personal experience and knowledge of the barriers and challenges facing homeless people is extensive, and she has an extraordinary ability to share that knowledge, particularly around a patient's right to excellent health care.

Consumer involvement in governance is a challenging issue for health care for the homeless programs, and organizationally Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program made the development of the Consumer Advisory Board and bringing consumers on to our governing board a priority over the past two years. We have made some very real progress, and I believe that a great deal of our success is related to the extraordinary leadership that Ellen Dailey has provided.

Ellen was a patient at the Barbara McInnis House in 1998 when she became a member of the program's first Consumer Advisory Board. She developed trusting relationships with staff, and was very effective in bringing the concerns of fellow residents to the staff and working to resolve problems. In late 1998, we expanded the small Barbara McInnis House Advisory Board to 12 members and broadened its mandate to represent all the people served by the program at all of our programs and sites. Ellen played a lead role in forming the new consumer advisory board, developing written guidelines, and recruiting and electing consumers with a broad base of experience with homelessness and our Program's services. She was elected Chair of the Consumer Advisory Board by her peers in July 1999 and was subsequently elected to the governing Board of Directors in September 1999. Ellen immediately became an active participant on the Board of Directors and has made a positive contribution in her six months of service. She has earned the respect of her peers on both the Consumer Advisory Board and the governing Board of Directors.

Ellen has a long history of volunteerism, including ten years as a Big Sister, and tutoring. She worked with the Cambridge School Department Parent Information Center and taught children about standardized examinations in preparation for applying to exam schools. Ellen recently began volunteering at the Chelsea Soldier's Home. I am honored to nominate Ellen as a model for the consumer leadership, advocacy and organizational skills that are the very foundation for community health center.



From EVERY SUCCESS STORY IS A GREAT STORY, interview by Jeff Olivet, published by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 2005
<http://www.nhchc.org/SuccessStory/edailey.html>

“When I was homeless,” says Ellen Dailey, “everyone assumed several things about me: that I had a substance abuse problem or a mental illness, or that I was just plain lazy. None of that is true.”

Ellen’s story is one that could happen to anyone. She had lived in the same home for 20 years in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She had a great job working with the desegregation program for the Cambridge Public Schools. Her two sons were grown and had both joined the military. Her life was stable.

But in 1993, several things went wrong all at the same time. Ellen became sick with heart problems that would end up taking years to be diagnosed correctly. She went into the hospital. Her landlady died, leaving control of the rental house to her nephew, who sold the house out from under Ellen. The grant that funded her position with the public schools was not renewed, so she had no job, and with her worsening medical condition, she did not have the energy to find other work. She had nowhere to go, and no source of income.

“I was too proud to go to my family,” Ellen says in her rich tenor voice. “When I became homeless, I got a pager and told my sons that I was having trouble with my phone line and if they would just page me, I would call them back.” It would be several years before Ellen’s family ever knew she had been homeless at all.

She had savings, so she moved into a motel. She stayed in motels for several months, burning through her entire life’s savings. Occasionally working day labor when she was healthy enough, Ellen recalls standing for twelve hours at a time selling newspapers.

When there was no money left to pay for the expensive motel rooms, Ellen was desperate. She knew nothing of shelters or homeless services, so she walked into the police station near Central Square in Cambridge and asked for help. The police sent her to Pine Street Inn, a very large shelter in Boston.

This reality of shelters was a new world for Ellen. There were lotteries for beds. Fear and uncertainty about where, if anywhere, she could find a bed for the night. She ended up at Woods-Mullin Shelter. By that time, her health had “taken a bad turn.” One day, she walked up to the nurse’s station in the shelter-based clinic. Standing there was Stefan Kertesz, a doctor with Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program.

“I had almost given up on medical care before that, but what other doctors had missed, Dr. Kertesz caught in three minutes,” Ellen says. She had been experiencing cardiovascular complications of thyroid disease. She needed surgery, and she needed it soon. But the shelters weren’t set up to accommodate people recovering from surgery. There was no good way to “stay on bed rest.”

Dr. Kertesz told Ellen about Barbara McInnis House, the respite program of Boston HCH. She had her thyroid removed and went to McInnis House to recover. During the course of her follow-up, Ellen also learned that she had a malignant tumor in her salivary gland. She had more surgery to remove the tumor, followed by 45 days of radiation treatment. “It would have been impossible without McInnis House for me to undergo radiation,” Ellen

says. Then she adds, “If it wasn’t for Boston HCH, I wouldn’t be here. I’d be dead, and I know it.”

During her 9-month stay at McInnis House, Ellen began working with Yolanda Sterling, a case manager, to explore housing options and reapply for disability. Ellen had been turned down for disability before, but had not had the energy to fight through the appeals process — not while suffering the physical debilitation of her illness and worrying about where she was going to stay each night.

Yolanda connected Ellen with Walnut House, a subsidized housing program. Ellen moved into a studio apartment—her first stable housing in more than two years—where she has lived since 1998.

During her time at McInnis House, Ellen was also approached by Barry Bock, now Director of Clinical Operations at Boston HCH, and asked to join the fledgling Consumer Advisory Board. Barry saw in Ellen an articulate advocate, one who could speak with clarity and wisdom about the injustices of homelessness, and could help find ways to make the voices of homeless individuals heard.

Ellen accompanied Barry to Washington, D.C. to speak at the National HCH Conference on the subject of establishing Consumer Advisory Boards. She was struck by how slow the idea was to take root in many parts of the country, and she became determined to do something about it. It wasn’t long before Ellen and a handful of others had established the National HCH Consumer Advisory Board (NCAB), creating a venue for people who had experienced homelessness to guide and ground the work of Health Care for the Homeless Projects. She also served for a time on the Board of the National Coalition for the Homeless. If that weren’t enough, she also serves as the Vice President of the Board of Directors for Boston HCH.

As Ellen became involved in speaking out about homelessness more publicly, she realized that her own story might make a difference for others. She was keenly aware, though, that she had still not told her family about her experience with homelessness. “Now, everybody knows,” Ellen says. “I realized that maybe having my story out there was going to help some people, so I told my family first.”



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