



Linda Louise Glenn

OCT 12, 1947 - JUN 17, 2024



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Linda Louise Glenn, a nationally renowned advocate for individuals living with intellectual disabilities, and a leader of the nation’s fight against the warehousing of people with disabilities, died at her home in North Fort Myers, Florida on June 17. She was 76.

Glenn’s efforts, and those of a short list of other national advocates, were instrumental in many of the most important legal, social, and programmatic reforms for people with disabilities, including the passage of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Considered an early pioneer in the field of intellectual disabilities, Glenn was often called upon as an expert witness before several federal courts adjudicating class action suits filed against states for their (mis)treatment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. During the early 1970’s Glenn worked in a regional program called the Eastern Nebraska Community Office of Retardation (ENCOR). It was in Omaha, Nebraska, where Glenn pioneered the practice of transitioning developmentally disabled individuals to community settings as opposed to maintaining them in segregated institutions – which was the national practice at the time.

ENCOR during that time was a veritable "Who's Who" of some of the most talented, creative people in the field of developmental disabilities. Among them was Wolf Wolfensberger, a German-American academic who influenced disability policy and practice through his development of the principles and practices of normalization and social role valorization (SRV). It was in Omaha where Glenn met Wolfensberger, who became her mentor as she was pioneering the concept of community living.

Dr. William Bronston, an advocate for the rights of people with developmental disabilities, said in an oral interview: “Wolfy and a woman named Linda Glenn, created this training and evaluation program where they systematically, in words, defined, in the minutest detail, every intimate



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aspect of what went into the designing, implementing, and functioning of a human service, and created a quantitative way in which to score any program from A to Z.”

At a 1981 Congressional hearing led by Senator Lowell Weicker, Glenn testified at length about the program she directed in Omaha, for which she reported startling results in educating those with intellectual disabilities. She gave examples of people who had been considered hopeless, living for 30 years or more in institutions, who learned to care for themselves, to speak, and in some cases to find jobs and contribute to their own support. In the Omaha program Glenn oversaw, people with disabilities lived in foster homes, where possible, or in small residential settings with one or two staff members.

In 1976, Glenn was recruited by Governor Michael Dukakis’ Administration to be the assistant commissioner for what was then called ‘Mental Retardation Services’ in Massachusetts and became the Department of Mental Health’s associate commissioner. During her tenure, Glenn spearheaded the de-institutionalization movement in Massachusetts. She carefully planned care to transition individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities out of poorly funded, over-crowded institutions, into new community homes, while crafting critical improvements to care at state schools, as lauded by Federal Court Judge Joseph Tauro who presided over class action cases concerning those institutions.

When asked to define the concept of “leadership,” Barbara Salisbury, chief executive officer of MAB Community Services since 2006, and former budget director for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and administrative dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, spoke of Linda Glenn as an example:

“Leadership is doing the right thing, whether it’s popular or not,” Salisbury said. “When I worked as state budget director under former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, there was a woman working in the administration named Linda Glenn who I look up to for embodying this spirit. At the time, institutionalization was the most popular approach for caring for people with intellectual disabilities. However, institutions often left people with intellectual disabilities sequestered away from the rest of society in largely subpar facilities. Linda helped to initiate a transition in Massachusetts where people with intellectual disabilities were integrated into their communities rather than closed off in these institutions. Although there was significant opposition to this deinstitutionalization process due to its newness and unfamiliarity initially, Linda persevered, and today people with intellectual disabilities have access to much more



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community support than they otherwise would. MAB honored Linda several years ago for this tremendous leadership.”

Perhaps one of Glenn’s most notable contributions was in the shuttering of the Staten Island Development Center in Willowbrook, New York, an institution where conditions and questionable medical practices and experiments prompted then US Senator Robert F. Kennedy to describe it as a "snake pit." At the time, Willowbrook was the biggest state-run institution for people with intellectual disabilities in the United States. As a result of the overcrowding and inhumane conditions, a federal class-action lawsuit was filed against the State of New York in 1972 by the parents of 5,000 residents of Willowbrook. In 1975, a court-ordered consent decree was signed that committed New York State to a lengthy list of improvements. Glenn was appointed as one of several monitors to oversee implementation of the consent decree. She rigorously evaluated the implementation of the court order, concluded that improvement of the institution was not feasible, and oversaw the transition of all former residents to new homes in the community.

In his book, “The Willowbrook Wars: Bringing the Mentally Disabled into the Community,” author David J. Rothman wrote, “Linda Glenn turned the Willowbrook Review Panel into an active, interventionist, and uncompromising body. Imagine how different the story might have been had panel members been looking for political advancement or careers in state government.” On September 17, 1987 Governor Mario M. Cuomo declared the Willowbrook State School on Staten Island "officially and forever closed," thanks largely to the tireless work of Glenn and others.

Because of her national experience and reputation, Linda Glenn was soon appointed as a court monitor for other consent decrees in New Mexico, Arizona, and Florida, forcing states to stop the warehousing of individuals with intellectual disabilities and serious mental illness.

Danna Mauch, PhD, President and CEO of the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health (MAMH), said of Linda, “In 1635 Sir Isaac Newton wrote ‘If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.’ Linda was the giant upon whose shoulders I’ve stood for decades in service and in friendship. I am grateful for her pointing the way, mentoring with wisdom, sharing her heart for serving people, strategizing change that endures, and being so kind. Her generosity of spirit and caring, and ambition for solving the needs of others inspired and sustains me and so many others.”



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Glenn was born on October 12, 1947 in Munich, Germany to Robert and Ann Field Glenn, both from Mississippi. Her father was in the United State Air Force and the family moved frequently while he was on assignment. Linda graduated from Ole Miss: University of Mississippi in 1969.

Glenn remained a tireless advocate for people with disabilities and those with intellectual disabilities throughout her lifetime and was honored throughout her life by various groups and non-profits for her pioneering role for creating a pathway for individuals with intellectual disabilities to live in the community.

Linda and her wife Christina Crowe traveled extensively and enjoyed residence in Brookline and Provincetown, Massachusetts and in Hawaii.

She loved playing poker and would be quick to join a game in any casino or just with friends. She was quite well known for having a poker face without compare.

When residing in Provincetown, Massachusetts, Linda became a generous benefactor and active volunteer with the organization Helping Our Women (HOW), a resource center for women living with chronic or serious health conditions in the Outer Cape towns from Eastham to Provincetown. Through personalized outreach HOW educated, supported and empowered women to take control of their healthcare, well-being and diverse needs.

She is survived by her wife Christina Crowe and her step-daughter Karen Zoltak of Sarasota, Florida; and by her sister Roberta Pabst of California, and her brothers Greg of St. Louis and Jeffrey of Arizona; and by her nephews Andrew Pabst of San Jose, CA, and Gary Pabst of Medford, MA.

Immediate funeral services for Linda are private. She will be laid to rest at Fort Myers Memorial Gardens Cemetery, 1589 Colonial Boulevard, Fort Myers, Florida 33907, (239) 936-0555 during a private service conducted at an undisclosed date and time.


To share a story or photo, leave a tribute or to offer condolences to her family at this difficult time please visit Linda's memorial webpage at www.fortmyersmemorial.com and sign her guestbook.

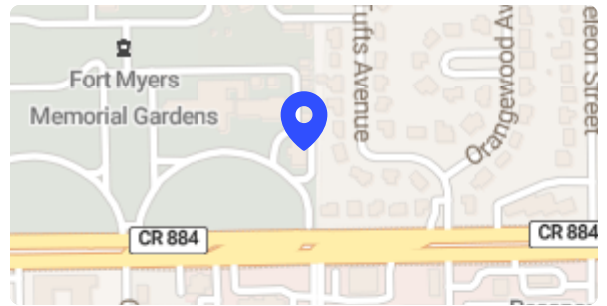


Events

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Cemetery Details

 **Fort Myers Memorial Gardens Cemetery**
1589 Colonial Boulevard, Fort Myers FL 33907





Tribute Wall

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Mary Slaughter posted:

Christina, I just recently learned that Linda passed away and am so sad to hear that news. She was certainly one of the most dynamic people that I ever had the pleasure of knowing her as a friend and working with her both in Omaha and then Arizona. I love that I got to know her a bit more in Az as a friend and got to meet you. And I will never forget she taught me how to play poker:-) I was fortunate indeed to be attached to her through work and as friends her many journeys. My heart goes out to you.....Mary Slaughter

January 10 at 9:26 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Linda by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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