

The HAP Foundation's hosts inaugural HAP Heritage Event to honor the history of hospice and embrace the future of serious illness care: Mary Runge, Former President of Horizon Hospice, inducted as Lifetime Trustee 2022

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By HAP Communications

Hospice has been a specialty for 56 years--a relatively new field in the realm of modern medicine, but over the last five decades, the field has exponentially grown and access to care continues to improve. The HAP Foundation hosted its annual HAP Heritage event on November 3rd to honor one of Chicagoland's leaders in the field of hospice and palliative care and to pay tribute to the rich history of hospice.

The idea of hospice care was first introduced by Dr. Cicely Saunders. While working with terminally ill patients in London, Dr. Saunders saw a need for new, specialized care that would focus on comfort care, symptom management, and pain relief, rather than treatments to cure. In 1967, Dr. Saunders founded St. Christopher's, the first hospice for the terminally ill in the United Kingdom. Dr. Florence Wald, Dean of the Yale School of Nursing, took a sabbatical to work at St. Christopher's to experience hospice firsthand. In 1974, Wald, two pediatricians, and a chaplain founded Connecticut Hospice, the first hospice in the United States. Over the next decade, legislators introduced bills to provide federal funds for hospice care. Over time, legislation was passed, federal funding was improved, and Medicare reimbursement rates increased, which opened access to hospice care for more terminally ill patients. In 2020, there were over five thousand hospice care providers in the United States, which provided care to 1.72 million patients.

HAP's Heritage Event paid tribute to Mary Runge, a leader who helped advance and improve the fields of hospice and palliative care in the Chicagoland area. Runge, past president of Horizon Hospice, provided leadership to establish hospice and



palliative care programs for children in Chicago, and she helped assist coalitions that supported hospice and palliative pediatric service. She was instrumental in helping to pass early Illinois legislation to reimburse health care institutions for pediatric palliative care services. Under her leadership, Horizon Hospice opened an inpatient hospice unit at Rush University Medical Center. Runge worked in the hospice industry for more than 35 years, initially as a nurse and later as a pioneering administrator, national leader, and advocate.

“Hospice leaders like Mary Runge have paved the way for The HAP Foundation to build upon and continue the legacy of making sure all receive the care they need and deserve,” said Joseph Matty, President of The HAP Foundation.

The evening honoring Runge was full of reminiscing and remembrance as friends, former colleagues, doctors, and social workers gathered together to congratulate her on her induction as a HAP Foundation Lifetime Trustee, and to honor her many accomplishments.

“Mary taught me through modeling and her actions how to honor personal and cultural differences when leading or interacting with others, how to enter spaces humbly and as a learner, knowing that everyone we meet has something to teach us, and how to treat everyone—employees, patients, families and others—with the deepest respect and a recognition that each person brings value to the community,” said Kim Downing, Executive Director of Program Evaluation and Research, of The HAP Foundation.

At the end of the evening, Mary was presented with flowers, a book, and an engraved vase to honor her lifetime contributions and achievements in the field of hospice and palliative care.