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Commemorating Wendy Hunter '92 Massage Profession Pioneer

by Wray Barraclough '89

There are people in the world who impact those they encounter – Wendy Hunter was that type of person. Wendy was widely respected, beloved and renowned, and her loss continues to be keenly felt by many. I first met Wendy when she was my student at Sutherland-Chan. I could have easily been intimidated by her as she was far more experienced and educated than I, but she ended up being one of the most gracious and kind students I have had the pleasure of teaching, and after that, a close friend.



Wendy Hunter BScN, RMT
July 1, 1945 - March 28, 2014

Wendy grew up in Belleville and came to Toronto to study at the Toronto East General Hospital School of Nursing; she then went on to a B.Sc. in nursing from the University of Windsor. After graduation, Wendy spent several of her early nursing years in the Canadian north but returned to Toronto to teach. She started at Centennial College in 1975 and had a long career of teaching, first in the nursing program and then in the paramedic program. Next, after attending Sutherland-Chan and becoming a massage therapist, Wendy designed, ran and taught in the Centennial College massage therapy program. She encouraged me to teach at Centennial and I had the pleasure of working with her for many years. Wendy was known for her dedication, high standards and ability to get things done. She was a woman of action but always had time to mentor a teacher or listen to a student.

When Wendy retired from Centennial College she turned her attention to the CMTO and was soon elected to council. She chaired the Complaints Committee, leaving her mark on the complaints process with the introduction of reflective writing as a way to help involved registrants examine their conduct. Wendy lived by her values and beliefs and consistently approached projects, people and patients with compassion and integrity. Those who knew Wendy reminisce about her booming laughter, but also the sometimes stern nature of her truthful and direct communication. She inspired courage. Above all, Wendy impressed upon those she engaged with to be responsible, practice self-reflection, and to take care of the self. Her parting mantra was often, "Take care of you."

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Wendy was active in many ways but valued balance and restorative practices. She travelled widely, went to the theatre regularly (musicals), had a dog (Gracie) and spent the entirety of most summers at her cottage on Lake Kaministiquia. She was a strong advocate – as a board member of the long term care home, True Davidson Acres, Wendy spearheaded a policy to ensure understanding and acknowledgement of the needs of LGBTQ residents and same-sex couples.

There are many more ways that Wendy left her mark. She was the recipient of numerous awards including the 2009 RMTAO Lifetime Achievement Award. She established endowment bursaries for massage therapy and paramedicine students. Her leadership at the CMTO and beyond contributed to the development of the interjurisdictional practice competencies, the backbone of our national massage therapy standardization. Yet, while having such a far-reaching vision, Wendy never lost sight of the power of the “laying on of hands” and the privilege of caring for others and witnessing their journey.

I have a couple of Wendy stories to share. Having been in private practice before POS machines were commonplace, I would often have a pocketful of cash. Wendy had noticed this and had even given me a money clip. I remember that, at one particular student gathering we were both attending, Wendy bustled over to me and asked, “How much money do you have in your pocket?” I think I had \$150.00. “Give it to me” she said, and off she went. She explained later that one of the students, a single mother, had no money for groceries and she knew I would have cash in my pocket. “Don’t worry, you’ll get it back.” I did.

Clearly, Wendy was pretty impressive and always very capable. She seemed to know the answer to any question one might have and be able to do pretty much anything. At Wendy’s retirement party, an alumnus mentioned that, on entering the room, she mistook some paramedics in uniform for pilots. Her internal dialogue went something like, “Wendy a pilot? (shrug) Yup, I guess so.”

It was a privilege and a joy to have known this wonderful person. I think I speak for many when I say that Wendy Hunter enriched much of what she came in contact with, from the lives of individuals to the profession as a whole.

Wray Barraclough, B.Sc., R.M.T. is a long-time educator, first teaching at Sutherland-Chan and then at Centennial College. She can be contacted at: (416)-289-5000 ext. 8039, wbarraclough@centennialcollege.ca

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