

Self-help pioneer Barbara Fox dies at 86

BY NANCY HICKS
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Barbara Fox, who opened her home to people in need and ran a self-help information center from her home for decades, died Friday.

Fox, 86, and her late husband, Ralph, started a group of halfway houses called Houses of Hope and were active in the early years of Alcoholics Anonymous in Lincoln.

"I loved Barbara Fox. She was one of a kind," said Ruth Thone, former first lady of Nebraska.

"She had a deep love of her community and all the self-help networks that she designed and ran."

"This woman never quit," Thone said.

Fox, who graduated with a de-

gree in journalism from the University of Nebraska in 1944, was a photojournalist.

She covered the last atomic bomb explosion in Nevada as a freelance journalist, and with her husband covered the Charles Starkweather murders and trial. She also was the first Lincoln correspondent for WOW-TV in 1955.



FOX

But Fox is better known for her work as a volunteer in Lincoln, particularly with addiction issues.

After her husband got sober, two days after Christmas in 1957, the two became active in AA, daughter Paige Namuth said.

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AA was small. There were no treatment programs. So they just started bringing people home to help them, Namuth said.

The Foxes began a system of halfway houses called Houses of Hope in 1962 and bought an old Catholic church that became a meeting place for AA.

Barbara Fox also was a co-owner, board member and benefactor of Antlers, a house at South Street and Sheridan Boulevard that offers an addiction treatment program and meeting space for self-help groups.

Fox started the self-help information center in 1962, at a time when self-help consisted primarily of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon meetings.

But she continued, keeping lists of groups and meetings and starting new self-help groups as the need arose.

"She just started in building this incredible underground network of caring people, and she never got paid, ever," Namuth said.

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"She was a journalist before anything else. If something happened in the paper, she would start a group to help that person."

She continued that service up to her death.

Two days ago, a man who had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis called her, and she got him networked with people all over the country, Namuth said.

"She was amazing. She was profoundly spiritual," Namuth said about her

mother. "God talked to her. And she listened and obeyed."

Fox suffered a stroke on Friday.

She is survived by a son, Kevin Fox; daughter and son-in-law Paige and Ron Namuth; three granddaughters; and four great-grandchildren.

Radical compassion is when someone comes to the door and you get a pillow and a glass of cranberry cocktail and listen to them, Namuth said.

"She practiced radical compassion."

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