



Sedgwick County...
working for you

National Public Health Week 2014

April 7-13

Nomination Form

Each year the Sedgwick County Health Department recognizes an individual that has shown a lifetime commitment to Public Health (at least 25 years of service).

Your name and department: Claudia Blackburn
Name and title of Nominee: Judy Johnston

Description of the nominee' career related to public health:

Judy Johnston has practiced as a Registered Dietitian and public health program manager and researcher for over 40 years. She has made and continues to make significant contributions to the Health of Kansans.

Judy began her career in 1973 after graduating from KSU, as a clinical dietitian at St. Francis hospital and progressively assumed more responsibilities until she became the Director of Nutrition Services at Riverside hospital in Wichita. During her 17 years in clinical practice she held adjunct faculty positions at KSU, KU and WSU and was involved with many diverse programs.

In 1990, she was recruited by the KDHE to direct the Kansas LEAN (Leadership to Encourage Activity and Nutrition), including coordinating the Kansas 5 A Day Program. What began as a pilot program in the Sedgwick County Health Department to influence nutrition and physical activity at the population level quickly grew to a model for partner engagement that earned national recognition. Paula Clayton recalls, "Judy took a conceptual plan created by a multi-agency planning group led by the Kansas Health Foundation and KDHE and created the model for engaging stakeholders in changing community environments. She has a remarkable talent for leading a community through an assessment process - in much the same way a clinician might assess a patient and empower them to make decisions about their care plan. Judy taught us that communities and coalition groups will discover the best possible solution for their particular situation. Her work with communities, school health, and worksites

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redefined how we approach community health promotion in Kansas and set the bar for the work our bureau remains committed to today”.

Following almost a decade of leading the LEAN program, Judy moved to the KSU Community Health Institute where, as an Extension Specialist, she served as a co-PI for an NIH R01 grant to develop and test models for behavior change intervention, and worked as a community development project trainer for the Kansas LEAN School Health Project.

During this time, she began working for KU School of Medicine-Wichita, Dept. of Preventive Medicine and Public Health as a teaching associate, research instructor and program director for the Center for Breast Cancer Survivorship.

According to Dr. James Early, one of her closest colleagues and friends, “What is most remarkable is her ability to see the big picture when it comes to community engagement. So many researchers are focused on answering a question. Judy focuses on increasing community engagement and increasing the capacity of the community to care for itself. For example, she took on the Healthy Congregations in Action project, funded by the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, a tremendous effort. She had enormous scope, engaging 30 churches from all over the state. She was responsible of training, technical assistance, administering mini-grants to the churches and creating material. This was an incredibly well devised initiative – no one else could pull it off. Judy sees the enormous scope of a project and is not daunted by it. Most would run in the other direction but she gets it done.”

Another example is Give Kids a Smile day.....

Other impressive work with churches includes training seminarians in integrating wellness, health and prevention into their sermons.

Years ago, she partnered with ComCare and the Behavioral community to develop a methodology and program 1,2,3 for life to prevent weight gain and illness from major side effects of anti-psychotic drugs.

The variety of her work is pretty astounding.

Kansas Survivorship work –

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Doren story – It is not a requirement for this award, that the nominee must have been a friend of Doren’s but Judy was and her colleague Terri Jones, tells a story about that relationship.

It was in the early years or infancy of the Department of Preventive Medicine that I came to work part-time for Doren, 1996 I believe (or was it 1997). I was still also working part-time or at my “steady” job as a Medical Technologist at SmithKline Beecham. It was about 3 or 4 months into my part-time employment at KUSM-W that I was talking with Doren about how difficult it was to keep two part-time jobs going (of which one sometimes took more full-time dedication) when he said, out of nowhere it seemed, “Well why don’t you just quit your other job.” That was a totally foreign idea to me on many levels, but that was Doren! It was about a year or two later that Judy Johnston and Pat Cox (whom we miss) came to rent space in our department as K-State employees, and yes, by this time I was working full-time in the Department of Preventive Medicine. I did not know it at the time but Doren and Judy had known each other for some time. It was only after I got to know Judy better and see how she interacted with Doren that I learned Judy loved to “mother” Doren and they had a history together. Actually, she was a bit more like a bossy, older sister, and Doren didn’t seem to mind. If I’m remembering things correctly, it was often Judy (and others) that kept telling Doren he should get a new car. He drove an old white Honda Civic Hatchback that he loved to keep running but eventually he gave in and got a new, used mini-van. It was also Judy that kept telling Doren that he needed to move out of his 4-plex apartment and buy a house. Eventually, Doren did give in to that idea as well and I think he bought a house near Judy and her husband. Their history together, that I spoke of earlier, began before my time of knowing either of them but I learned that they had a deep mutual respect and friendship as I saw them interact. Doren was one to solve problems and if you had a problem, he had the answer or was there ready to help. The help he gave Judy was in one of her most trying and difficult times, when she was diagnosed with breast cancer and during her treatments. Doren brought Judy food for sustenance and was there to listen, give support, give medical advice, and was a blessing to her soul. I tear up when I think that Doren is no longer with us but I know he was instrumental in helping Judy in her breast cancer journey and may be part of why we are blessed to have Judy still with us today! Judy is a strong woman and is well deserving of the Doren Fredickson Award.

Contact Information for the Nominee:

Judy Johnston, MS, RD, LD

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