

Comments shared by Rick Wilk to Lon Berkeley at the Health and Medicine Policy Research Group Board of Directors meeting, January 3, 2017

Lon Berkeley joined the Joint Commission in 1997 and has been the Project Director for the Community Health Center Accreditation initiative since it was launched in 2011. In 2014 he led expansion to accreditation of Behavioral Health Care organizations providing or associated with primary care practices. He was also the Co-Lead for the Primary Care Medical Home Initiative for the Joint Commission. Lon's work at the Joint Commission brought the respect of Joint Commission accreditation into the community health center world, enhancing the reputation of both.

Before this, Lon was the Executive Director of the Illinois Primary Health Care Association. Over a 12- year period under Lon's leadership, his vision, and relentless work ethic, an extraordinary team was built taking this small federally funded state association to become one of the largest, most impactful primary care associations in the nation. The IPHCA became viewed as a model of how to grow and strengthen the FQHC movement. During his years leading the IPHCA, all of the FQHCs in the state were members and he was a visionary in the field by including rural, migrant, school-based, and other health centers in the state of Illinois to work with the IPHCA.

Lon was especially appreciated for recruiting prowess, his nurturing of new centers, and his responsiveness to the needs of the FQHCs and other health and social service providers. For example, one of his colleagues shared a story of how they met, which to me speaks to the can do and trusting spirit Lon exudes. Lon had finished making a presentation to obtain business from the State of Illinois along with other competing organizations. Nancy Drew remembers this first meeting with Lon because after each organization finished presenting, Lon went up to her and introduced himself in a friendly manner. Nancy was surprised because there were competitors. They eventually became friends and colleagues and Nancy shared many fond memories of the work they did.

Under Lon's leadership, the IPHCA worked with the State of Illinois to create the first cost-report format that ensured that health centers receive 100% of their costs. This extraordinary accomplishment which has allowed FQHCs to develop a strong financial foundation and many to grow and serve more people and create good jobs. The IPHCA was one of the two leading states in the country in developing FQHC look-alikes. This federal designation generated additional resources and opportunities for these organizations, more comprehensive services and jobs. Because of this visionary approach, Illinois was strategically positioned to benefit when funding was made available to develop new federally funded health centers. This approach resulted in an explosion of new health centers in Illinois, hundreds of thousands of people obtaining quality primary care services and new jobs in economically disadvantaged rural, urban and suburban communities. Lon's colleague, Michael Gelder, claims that Lon coined the phrase look-alike, which now is in general use throughout the country.

He developed a lead role for the Project Cornerstone work for the Association which provided computers that connected to the WIC, food stamps and other benefits for low income women of the health centers. Lon also led IPHCA into a pivotal role in recognizing the importance of Information technology for the community health centers and helped secure the first federal funding from HRSA for health center EMR collaborative projects. Lon also played a leadership role in developing school-based health centers in Illinois and connecting health centers with broader maternal and child health efforts, like the Healthy Mothers Health Baby coalition. Lon was also a visionary in the area of health promotion for disease prevention and he has worked tirelessly to build the infrastructure to take action in this area.

He helps those of us around him feel important and empowered by encouraging us to make the greatest impact possible and supporting us in these efforts. Lon has provided opportunities to many public health professionals to leverage their passion and skills to grow safety net providers. For example, he engaged an expert in Medicaid law to help FQHCs thrive in Illinois. He relentlessly sought out organizations that could become FQHCs and nurtured their top leadership so they could grow as leaders to help their health center grow to meet the needs in their communities. His career reflects work with a disparate group of people to ensure that the health centers and other safety net providers would grow and address the varied needs of the diverse communities they strive to serve.

In the spirit of community services and commitment to health equity, Lon volunteers in a medical mission in Zacapa, Guatemala, *Hearts in Motion*, a multi-service community-based organization where he helps in any way possible to help this underserved community to improve their health. And maintains his professional credentials by attending 40 consecutive APHA annual meetings around the country.

I don't know if you are aware of this, but Lon is an extraordinary sportsman. He is a talented athlete and the ultimate team player. To many of us, he is more than an extraordinary colleague, he is a trusted friend. Thank you for your extraordinary contributions to the HRSA mission and to the people we live and work with across the country.