The Definition of Charity

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Few people in my memory have a name that more appropriately defines the life they have lived. "Charitable purpose" as defined in O.C.G.A. § 43-17-2 includes any charitable or benevolent purpose including health, education, or social welfare. Anyone who knew Charity Scott knows that she lived a life devoted to providing and improving the health of her community, the education of law students about health law and its use to improve the health of her community, and social welfare by addressing the socioeconomic determinants of health. If she had not been assigned that name at birth, those of us who knew her could have easily assigned Charity as a nickname.

I can only relate the contributions of Charity to health, education, and social welfare that I observed, and I suspect that my observations are only a small segment of benefits that our society has had bestowed upon it by her. So, indulge me as I relate the history of Charity's contributions that I observed, including the major influence she has had on me personally. I am sure that almost everyone who knew Charity could also relate the ways in which she was an influence on their lives.

First let me relate what I observed that Charity contributed to the organization of the health law bar here in Georgia. I first met Charity at meetings of the Georgia Academy of Healthcare Attorneys (GAHA), an organization that had its roots in the Georgia Hospital Association. Its principal activities were providing seminars and publications that helped all of us who practiced in the area to stay current. It was also a vehicle to connect with others who practiced in the area. I must confess that I think Charity preceded me as a member of GAHA, even though I had been representing health care clients for some time, she was, as always, leading and helping. She was also present in the earliest stages of the organization of State Bar of Georgia Health Law Section. She was not just a founder of the section, she was always a leader in its activities that helped all of us though its continuing

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legal education efforts. It was at the State Bar Health Law Section events that I got to know her, and appreciate the depth of her knowledge and the impact of her leadership.

One of the areas of Charity's focus in her relationship to the State Bar was the initiation of medical-legal partnerships. In the past decade or so, while representing and serving on boards of healthcare providers, I have many times seen projects that address "social determinants of health" and their impact on patients in need and the bottom line of the provider. However, Charity was decades ahead of the widespread focus on the need to address "social determinants" as part of the regular provision of care. In the early 1990's Charity partnered with Sylvia Caley, who was a lawyer and an RN with experience at the Atlanta Legal Aid Society. They undertook to get hospitals to participate in medical-legal partnerships (MLPs).

Charity's efforts to establish MLPs were widespread and untiring. One of my law partners had a contact on the board of a major charity hospital in the early 1990s, and Charity and Sylvia approached our firm to assist them in presenting the idea of an MLP to a committee of that major charity hospital. The committee approved the formation of the MLP. However, the Board, apparently convinced that lawyers were simply the source of malpractice claims, turned down the committee's recommendation.

Almost a decade later in the fall of 1999, I approached Charity at a Health Law Section of the State Bar meeting to see if she had any ideas as to how I might help out at Georgia State University College of Law when I retired in a few years. She said I should contact her when I was closer to retirement, and we could figure something out. However, Charity was not one to engage in delay, and two weeks later she called me and asked if I would teach the Health Care Regulation (now Health Law: Finance & Delivery) course the next semester. While I was very busy with my law practice at that time, she convinced me that I could teach the course in the evenings. I believe that when I started teaching the evening course the next semester, I was only the second person after Charity at Georgia State Law teaching a health law subject, but I was not the last. What a fantastic vantage point from which to watch Charity at work in being the founding director of the Center for Health, Law & Society with its now, I believe, eleven distinguished faculty members in addition to its founder.

A decade after Charity and Sylvia were turned down in their first effort to establish a MLP, they succeeded in a big way. The general counsel of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta was much more receptive to the idea than previous entities had been.[1] The MLP that he approved was the initial phase of the Health Law Partnership (HeLP). HeLP has grown to place full-time Atlanta Legal Aid Society lawyers at each of the three constituent hospitals of Children's and at its very large outpatient facility. For more than a decade after the initiation of HeLP at Children's, the managing attorney of the Legal Aid attorneys assigned to those facilities was Sylvia Caley, Charity's colleague in this effort. I am fortunate to have been able to volunteer with HeLP and Legal Aid.[2]

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HeLP was much more than an impressive provider of legal services. Just a brief summary of the developments it contributed to and inspired:

1. Children's assigned a medical director to provide medical expertise to the Legal Aid attorneys and connect attorneys with the medical staff;
2. The related HeLP Legal Services Clinic, which provides law students the opportunity to help Children's patients, became the second clinic here at the Georgia State University College of Law;[3]
3. The clinic and Legal Aid established relationships with the medical schools and social work programs at Emory and Morehouse that include internships and rounds (the professor responsible for such community outreach at Morehouse Medical School is a graduate of the HeLP Clinic);

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4. From its inception, the legal and medical leaders of HeLP have been advocates of MLPs nationally and internationally;
5. Here in Georgia, they advocated for and consulted in the establishment of an MLP by the Georgia Legal Services Program at the 700-bed teaching hospital for Mercer Medical School in Macon, Georgia;
6. The Georgia Legislature passed a bill in 2014 that endorsed medical-legal partnerships and created a process for certifying programs within the state;[4]
7. Motivated by HeLP and the Macon MLP, the Georgia Legislature voted to provide funds in the budget for the establishment of MLPs;[5] and
8. Today, four MLPs exist in Georgia, with hopes for additional state funds to do more.[6]

Charity, of course, was also the initiator of and the initial director of the Center of Law, Health, and Society at Georgia State College of Law.[7] Under her leadership, that organization grew from the initial course she taught to include the HeLP Legal Services Clinic, a multitude of courses taught by major national scholars, a health law certificate program, an LL.M. degree and dual degrees with public health and health administration. A testament to Charity's leadership was her ability to attract outstanding faculty to Georgia State, and her ability to encourage and inspire their joint effort in establishing a program of the quality that I, for one, am very proud. Not to be overlooked is the wisdom shown in passing the torch to the leadership first to Professor Leslie Wolf and later to Professor Erin Fuse-Brown.

Not an academic like the other members of the faculty of the Center for Law, Health & Society, I have not viewed Charity from a national perspective. However, I have attended national meetings and observed the regard in which she was received by colleagues from other law schools, and I know she was held in high esteem by them. How could the Charity that I observed not be? Perhaps the best evidence of that national regard is the standing of the Center for Law, Health, & Society that she founded. To be careful so as not to inspire the competition too much, I must add to the tribute to the legacy of Charity the observation that she built from the ground up the number one health law program in the country.

I cannot conclude with just a recitation of accomplishments by Charity. Even with no such accomplishments, those of us who knew her would have been inspired by her caring approach for her students and colleagues and her dedication to addressing the needs of the less fortunate of our society.

Note

The author has no conflicts of interest to disclose.

References

1. Health Law Partnership, *available at* <https://www.healthlawpartnership.org> (last visited April 30, 2024). For a full discussion of the creation of the HeLP Legal Services Clinic and the accompanying course, see L. Bliss, et al, "A Model for Interdisciplinary Clinical Education: Medical and Legal Professionals Learning and Working Together to Promote Public Health," *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education* 18 (2012): 149-164.
2. Editor's note — the author is modest. Randall Hughes has shared his time and expertise with Atlanta Legal Aid Society throughout his long career. See Center for Law, Health & Society, "Celebrating Faculty Fellow Randall Hughes," *Center Briefings* (Spring, 2016), *available at* <https://law.gsu.edu/document/spring-2016/?wpdmdl=192945&refresh=662c255ed3ecc1714169182> (last visited April 30, 2024).
3. Georgia State University College of Law, Health Law Partnership (HeLP) Legal Services Clinic, *available at* <https://law.gsu.edu/student-experience/experiential-learning/clinics/health-law-partnership-legal-services-clinic/> (last visited April 30, 2024).
4. Center for Law, Health & Society, "Legislature Recognizes 10 Year of Health Law Partnership," *Center Briefings* (Fall 2014), available at <https://law.gsu.edu/document/fall-2014/?wpdmdl=192948&refresh=662c255ee89dd1714169182> (last visited April 30, 2024); Center for Law, Health & Society, "HeLP Approved as Medical-Legal Partnership," *Center Briefings* (Fall 2018), available at <https://law.gsu.edu/document/fall-2018/?wpdmdl=192940&refresh=662c255ba36471714169179> (last visited April 30, 2024).
5. O.C.G.A. Sec. 31-2-4(d)(11); See Georgia HB19 for FY2024 approving $619,000 for medical-legal partnership.
6. The four current medical-legal partnerships in Georgia are the Health Law Partnership (HeLP) with Georgia State University College of Law, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and Atlanta Legal Aid Society in Atlanta; Grady Health System with Atlanta Legal Aid Society in Atlanta; Atrium Navicent Health with Georgia Legal Services Program in Macon; and McKinney Medical Center with Georgia Legal Services Program in Waycross and Folkston.
7. Georgia State University College of Law, Center for Law, Health & Society, *available at* <https://law.gsu.edu/faculty-centers/center-for-law-health-society/> (last visited May 1, 2024).

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