In Memory of Mary Cay Sengstock

On May 8, 2014, Michigan’s sociology community lost one of its most productive and most beloved members. On that day, following a long battle with cancer, Mary Cay Sengstock died at age 78. She was a member of the faculty of Wayne State University (W.S.U.) for forty-eight years, serving in many capacities including Head of the Department of Sociology, Graduate Advisor, Member and President of the W.S.U. Academic Senate, and Grievance Officer for the American Association of University Professors.

Mary Cay was a tireless and supportive mentor who chaired numerous M.A. and Ph.D. Committees. She and W.S.U.’s minority and women graduate students had a special attraction for one another, and she was largely responsible for creating the high level of diversity that characterizes the department to this day. Her best known (and pioneering) research is on the Detroit’s Chaldean community, for which she won national recognition. She was also a leader in the applied sociology movement and was a founding member of The Sociological Practice Association and The Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology. She served for many years on The Commission for Applied and Clinical Sociology, evaluating sociology programs throughout the country that had applied for accreditation in sociological practice.

A long-time member of the Michigan Sociological Association, she won the Marvin Olsen Distinguished Service Award from the Association as well as the Lester F. Ward Award from the Association for Applied and clinical sociology.

Mary Cay was a delightful friend, a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother, and a highly respected teacher. Her spirit will live on in the hearts and minds of her numerous students and she will continue to influence future generations of sociologists through the Mary Cay Sengstock Diversity Scholarship that she anonymously endowed.

Written by Jay Weinstein