



The Women Who Launched Long-Term Care Advocacy in Kansas

Spearheaded by the activism of Anna “Petey” Cerf, a “band of six” women from the Lawrence and Topeka communities came together with a shared vision: to improve the quality of long-term care for older adults and adults with disabilities in Kansas nursing homes. They were appalled by the poor conditions and mistreatment that they witnessed in many of these facilities and knew that something had to be done.

These women, Jessie Branson, Anna “Petey” Cerf, Lesley (Lee) Ketznel, Harriet Nehring, Katie Pyle, and Bryona Wiley, were not content to simply accept the status quo. They refused to turn a blind eye to the suffering of those who were most vulnerable and were determined to make a change.

Together, they founded Kansans for Improvement of Nursing Homes in 1975 and launched a reform movement through political advocacy, lobbying for changes to the laws and regulations that governed nursing homes.

Their efforts were not always easy. They faced opposition and hostility from those who were resistant to change and had to fight tirelessly to make their voices heard. But they persevered, driven by a deep sense of compassion and a commitment to making a difference.

The organization has evolved over the past 48 years (even changing its name to Kansas Advocates for Better Care), but the significant impact on the lives of countless individuals in Kansas remains. KABC continues to advocate for policies and regulations that improve the quality of care in all long-term care settings and provide support and resources to individuals and families who are navigating the complex world of long-term care.

The legacy of these six women is a testament to the power of advocacy and the impact that dedicated individuals can have on their communities. They refused to accept things as they were and fought for change, making a profound difference in the lives of so many while emphasizing the fundamental right to be treated with dignity and respect.

As we celebrate Women's History Month this March, let us remember the courage and determination of these trailblazing women, and let us recommit ourselves to the fight for better care for all. Their legacy continues to inspire us today.



Petey Cerf



Harriet Nehring



Lesley Ketznel



Jessie Branson



Katie Pyle



Bryona Wiley