

Tribute to Beverly Eckert

Given by Carol Ashley
March 7, 2009
Julia A. Stark Elementary School
Stamford, CT

Beverly touched many lives. Like many of you here, today, I was one them.

Over the past seven years, I had the privilege of working with Beverly on national security and safety issues.

Our friendship began in 2002, when we participated in a World Trade Center Task Force hearing. Beverly testified on behalf of the Skyscraper Safety Campaign. Her testimony was low-key and powerful. She was a strong advocate for improved safety regulations.

Soon after, we began working together on the Family Steering Committee, a group of twelve 9/11 family members who supported the creation of the 9/11 Commission. It was a collective effort to make our country more secure. Beverly helped shape our strategy and our success.

We benefited from her energy and focus and her no-nonsense approach.

Beverly could look at an issue, peel away the extraneous layers and get to the heart of it. Then just as quickly she could come up with key talking points.

She was not afraid to ask difficult questions or to demand answers from government officials. Sometimes dealing with the government was frustrating, and sometimes, even infuriating. Nevertheless, Beverly's approach was always calm.

Once she had a goal in sight, she persisted until she had accomplished what she set out to do. At one point we decided to hand deliver open letters to every Senate office. It was an effective strategy, but walking on those marble floors for eight hours was brutal. At the end of the day Beverly could barely walk. Her feet were aching and blistered, but she would not stop until the work was done.

By the time the Family Steering Committee disbanded in 2005, the 9/11 Commission had issued its report and the Intelligence Reform Act had passed. But there was still work to be done to make our country secure.

In 2007, Beverly returned to Washington along with five other family members, to campaign for passage of additional security legislation based on 9/11 Commission recommendations.

In January, she was back in Washington again, this time for preliminary meetings with the chairman of the Commission for the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Beverly had taken the lead by arranging the meeting.

When she committed to a cause, she was a bundle of energy.

On the morning of February 6th, we rode the Acela together to Washington for a meeting with the President. She was relaxed, and as upbeat and optimistic as I have ever seen her. It is a wonderful memory.

We talked about her volunteer work at this school. Beverly loved working with the children and beamed when she talked about them.

Because I am a retired teacher, she asked for strategies to help the children with reading and math. She listened and asked questions with the same fervor as when we were working toward passage of national security legislation.

No matter what her goal, Beverly poured her heart into it.

She genuinely cared about people and that caring fueled her activism. When she saw a need, she acted.

Her reach was wide. Many benefited from Beverly's dedicated spirit, determination and courage.

Her legacy is all the good that she accomplished on behalf of others. The good things she did will live on.

What a wonderful tribute it would be to Beverly, if each of us reached out to help others in the same way she did, with dedication, kindness and a generous spirit.