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News

'Reba' Moses, co-founder of Community Health Center, helped 'calm the troubled waters'

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MIDDLETOWN >> One might call Lillian "Reba" Moses a diminutive giant.

Despite her small stature, she was among the city's movers and shakers, a woman who always wanted to calm someone's troubled waters, a woman who helped found Community Health Center Inc.

She passed away Thursday night at the Middlesex Convalescent Home on Randolph Road. She was 88.

The daughter of a South Carolina sharecropper, Moses and her late husband, James, came to Middletown in the early 1940s, according to Mark Masselli, the president and CEO of CHC, founded in 1972 when Masselli, Moses and Gerry Weitzman teamed up to provide healthcare to the underserved.

Soon after their arrival, James and Reba Moses helped to build Zion Church, now behind the YMCA.

"She was a foot soldier in the civil rights movement and the war on poverty," Masselli said.

Later, Reba Moses was the head of community services for the Community Action for Greater Middletown, the anti-poverty agency, now known as CRT.

Masselli said they met in the early 1970s and she and Weitzman were the founding board members. She stayed on the CHC board until about six years ago.

"They gave us inspiration and Reba in particular, always inspired us to do great work for those who had been forgotten and unseen. She was one of a kind," he said. "She always made sure that whoever she was talking with left with a sense that there was a better solution. She helped calm the troubled waters. She was always reaching. She wanted you to be successful. She was a mentor for so many people in town."

Today, the agency is at 635 Main St. in Middletown and there are 208 locations in Connecticut. CHC serves 130,000 patients a year.

She was the kind of person who never said no to an idea or goal.

"She was not afraid to speak the truth to power. She would stand up for any injustice she saw," Masselli said.

Though she was only 80 pounds and stood about 4 feet, 6 inches, "she spoke powerfully and honestly and sought to make a better day.

"She had enormous health problems through her life yet she remarkably stayed so positive and so optimistic. She always had an incredibly optimistic view of the people she encountered," he said.

At CHC's 40th anniversary celebration in May, her life was celebrated as a founding member.

Reba and James Moses had five sons, a daughter and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

A service is being planned at Crossroads Church for Friday. Biega Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

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