

HONORING ALYCE ROBERTS CHEATHAM

December 9, 1920 – May 21, 2017



It is with great sadness that the Center for Ethics in Health Care acknowledges the death of Alyce Roberts Cheatham who died peacefully on Sunday May 21, 2017. Alyce grew up in the south, and moved to Portland in 1954, bringing her southern hospitality with her.

In 1963, she spent time with Dr. Albert Schweitzer at the hospital he founded in Lambarene, Gabon, West Africa. She was profoundly influenced by two weeks of study focused on Dr. Schweitzer's life and works, with particular emphasis on his teaching of "Reverence for Life". She worked alongside trained medical personnel and others, like herself, who simply wanted to do what they could to assist Dr. Schweitzer. This was a step in her life journey that broadened her worldview tremendously. She said that Dr. Schweitzer's statement: "Those who are blessed with health, talent and means owe a service to community and mankind" was a guiding light in her life.

Alyce's respect for Dr. Schweitzer's teachings was reflected in her commitment to volunteer work for the arts, education, health care, and community development. She generously supported the First Presbyterian Church. One of her later accomplishments at the church was to lead the planning and fundraising for the underground parking lot and beautiful park above it.

Alyce was also an enthusiastic supporter of Oregon Health & Sciences University, with particular fondness for Doernbecher, where she served as President, Trustee, and Emeritus Trustee of the Doernbecher Children's Hospital Foundation Board. She said that she was so grateful that her own children were healthy, and she wanted to do what she could to help other children. In her later years, Alyce became a Founder and passionate advocate for the OHSU Center for Ethics in Health Care. She was proud of the many accomplishments of the Center for Ethics, especially the Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) Program, which focused on the necessity to communicate and honor patient preferences for life-sustaining treatments. After its beginnings in Oregon in 1990, POLST became a nationally recognized program and Alyce's contributions to this effort continue to fuel innovation. Her generosity has improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

Rest in Peace, Alyce Roberts Cheatham. You have done so much to benefit our community and humankind.