

A Tribute to Linda Buettner

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Abstract:

On April 26, 2012, the gerontological practice, education, research, and care communities lost one of their foremost members with the passing of Dr. Linda (Lin) Lee Buettner, 56. Lin and her partner, Sue Fitzsimmons, were frequent and valued contributors, editorial board members, and reviewers for both the *Journal of Gerontological Nursing* and *Research in Gerontological Nursing*, for many years.

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Article:

On April 26, 2012, the gerontological practice, education, research, and care communities lost one of their foremost members with the passing of Dr. Linda (Lin) Lee Buettner, 56. Lin and her partner, Sue Fitzsimmons, were frequent and valued contributors, editorial board members, and reviewers for both the *Journal of Gerontological Nursing* and *Research in Gerontological Nursing*, for many years.

Linda received her undergraduate degree at State University of New York College at Cortland, her master's degree at Bowling Green University, and her doctorate in Gerontology and Recreational Therapy from The Pennsylvania State University. Prior to her death, she was a professor in the department of Community and Recreational Therapy at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and was an adjunct at Binghamton University and the University of Stavanger in Stavanger, Norway. She had previously worked at Ithaca College and Binghamton University in New York and Florida Gulf Coast University.

Lin was world renowned for her study of therapeutic programs for older adults with secondary symptoms of dementia, depression, delirium, and apathy, as well as evaluating nonpharmacological interventions. She was Editor of the *American Journal of Recreation Therapy* and *Activities Directors' Quarterly for Alzheimer's & Other Dementia Patients*, along with serving on numerous editorial boards. At Binghamton University, she was Director of the

Caswell Alzheimer's Disease Assistance Center and at Florida Gulf Coast University, she was Director of the Center for Positive Aging.

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Lin received research funding from many sources, large and small, and authored many books and hundreds of publications. An inspirational speaker, she was able to excite and electrify diverse audiences—from sophisticated scientists to nursing home aides. As a teacher, she mentored and inspired her students and colleagues. She received many awards in honor of her achievements, including the Barry Reisberg Award for Non-Pharmacologic Research, Theory, and Clinical Practice; North Carolina Therapeutic Recreation Professor of the Year; American Therapeutic Recreation Association Fellow, Scholarly Achievement, and Presidential Awards; and JGN's own Edna Stilwell Writing Award. Additionally, she was a fellow in the Gerontology Society of America and the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education. She participated as an expert panel member for national and governmental agencies.

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Lin Buettner was an instructor and team evaluator for Delta Society's Pet Partners, for which Boo was an animal-assisted therapy dog. Photo courtesy of Suzanne Fitzsimmons, MS, ARNP

More than a decade ago, Lin founded "Dementia Day Camp," a consortium of dementia researchers from around the world that meet annually to discuss the future of dementia research. She was well known and respected internationally for her innovative research ideas, including: wheelchair biking for older adults, Simple Pleasures for nursing homes, and college courses for people with mild cognitive impairment. Her warmth and gentle presence will be greatly missed by her family, friends, and numerous colleagues in the fields of recreational therapy, geriatrics, nursing, and dementia care.

Although Lin was a pioneer in the field of recreational therapy and shaped the role of the recreational therapist in long-term care, she was a giving interdisciplinary colleague, who greatly influenced gerontological nursing and demonstrated firsthand how collaborations between nurses, recreational therapists, and others could improve both quality of care and quality of life for people with dementia. She served on the board of directors for the American Therapeutic Recreation Association and led the Geriatric Treatment Network, mentoring many up-and-coming professionals. She developed professional practice guidelines, monographs, and shared her research and work willingly to interested practitioners through numerous trainings and presentations.

Her understanding of the relationship between human and animals led her to a passion: animal-assisted therapy. She worked tirelessly for Pet Partners[®] (formerly the Delta Society), becoming a trainer and facilitating classes in Florida and North Carolina, preparing hundreds of Pet Partner Teams. Along with students and colleagues, Lin conducted research that demonstrated the

importance of animals to health outcomes. Although Lin died much too young, she leaves a lasting legacy. Those of us in gerontological nursing who were privileged to know her have lost an extraordinary friend, mentor, and collaborator, and are deeply saddened by her passing.

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