

Women's center co-founder Alice Chapman dies

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Chapman, who was originally from New Jersey, moved to Danbury with her husband, George, and their six children, in 1970 and almost immediately became involved in the struggle for equal rights for women.

In 1975, she was one of a small group of women who founded the center, envisioning it as a non-political place for women to gather and socialize, share ideas and explore their roles in the community. Over the years, it has evolved into a major social agency dedicated to preventing domestic and sexual violence and protecting the victims of such crimes.

She held a number of positions within the organization and was still an active member of its board of directors when she died.

"One could not find a better role model for women today," said Rona Rothhouse, current president of the Women's Center. "She didn't sit by and watch. She created a legacy, she was my friend and I will miss her, along with the hundreds of other people whose lives she touched."

Chapman became an early proponent of the federal Equal Rights Amendment, and took part in numerous marches in support of it. She also joined the National Organization for Women, and served as the group's treasurer for six years, a job that required her to live in Washington during the week and return to her family on weekends, daughter Pamela Chapman said.

"She grew up in an era where expectation for women was marriage and family," Chapman, said. "Even as a young girl, she wanted to go to college, and she was interested in mathematics, when many women weren't. She was a homemaker, but there was this other part. She was always involved politically."

George Chapman, who died in 1999, was "a traditionalist, an old-school Catholic guy, but he was proud of her. He was supportive when she went to Washington and commuted home," Pamela Chapman recalled.

The couple were married for 55 years.

Chapman is survived by her children, Arthur of California, David of Texas, Peter of New Jersey, Richard of Pennsylvania, Pamela of Danbury, and Gregory of California, along with numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren.