

The Dr. Lynn Cook Hartwig Public Health Program



Dr. Lynn Cook Hartwig (Norma Lynn Cook of Jackson, MS) founded the Center for Community Health at The University of Southern Mississippi in 1988, guided it to accreditation in 1993 and directed the program until her illness forced her to retire in 1995.

In spite of being diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer in November of 1988, Lynn spent the next seven years building an interdisciplinary school of public health for South Mississippi while battling the disease. The program grew to seven faculty members and 100 students pursuing three types of master's degrees and two bachelor's degrees by the time of her death. She passed away on April 26, 1996 at the age of 48.

Lynn Cook attended Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, GA, her freshman year, before earning her bachelor's degree in History from The University of Southern Mississippi in 1969, graduating Magna Cum Laude from the Honors College.

While her husband, USM alumnus Geoffrey Hartwig, was in medical school at Duke University, Lynn earned her master's degree in British History at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill. She later worked in the Department of Community and Family Medicine at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C. It was during this time she became passionate about Public Health and began work on her PhD at UNC. In 1980, her family moved back to Hattiesburg where she spent eight years as an adjunct assistant professor at the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine before joining the faculty at USM.

Lynn recognized the need for a School of Public Health in South Mississippi and approached Dr. Aubrey K. Lucas, then President of USM, with her proposal for the new school. It was approved by the IHL (Institutions of Higher Learning) Board, and then funded through the Legislature thanks to her leadership.

Dr. Hartwig wrote the curriculum and hired the first professors. She guided it through accreditation in 1993. Lynn served as committee chair and in many other roles for the American Public Health Association, the Mississippi Public Health Association and was a frequent advisor to the Mississippi State Department of Health.

Off-campus, Dr. Hartwig served as a ruling elder at Westminster Presbyterian Church where she co-founded The Breadbasket, an ecumenical food pantry. She also helped to create the Pine Belt Immunization Coalition to increase the rate of immunization among children.

In February of 1996, the Sales and Marketing Executives of Hattiesburg honored her with their Executive of the Year Award. The week after her death, she was honored posthumously by the South Central Mississippi Bar Association with a Liberty Bell award for her contributions to Forrest County. Hattiesburg Clinic, where her husband, Dr. Geoffrey Hartwig, practiced medicine, held a golf tournament in her honor for a number of years to raise funds for scholarships for health science students, and endowed a scholarship in her name at The University of Southern Mississippi.

It is the desire of Dr. Geoffrey Hartwig, his wife Dr. Marcia Hartwig and their family to secure a lasting tribute Lynn by naming the Public Health program her name.