



Dr. Natalie Stephens Turner 1920 - 2012

Remembering A Visionary

Dr. Natalie Stephens (Turner), a true visionary and steadfast advocate for survivors of sexual violence, died of natural causes on Friday, January 13.

All of us at RVA are deeply saddened by her passing and express our sincere condolences to Dr. Stephens' family, friends and colleagues. We are proud that Dr. Stephens' legacy lives on in the thousands of individuals and families helped by RVA's 24/7 crisis intervention, medical and legal advocacy and counseling services.

"Dr. Stephens had extraordinary foresight and courage when founding RVA over 38 years ago, a time that there were few, if any, resources for rape victims in Chicago. Her pioneering work has helped ensure that almost 30,000 women, men and children who are survivors of sexual violence have not been alone in the initial aftermath of the trauma and throughout their journey of healing. The true impact of Dr. Stephens' work is immeasurable, and we are so grateful for her commitment and courage." Sharmili Majmudar, RVA's Executive Director.

Dr. Stephens was a trailblazer from the very beginning. She decided at 5 years of age to become a doctor and let nothing deter her from that goal. Dr. Stephens was one of four women in her medical school class at Syracuse University, all that the university would admit. She went on to intern at Baltimore City Hospitals (1945), at a women's hospital in San Francisco, and at the Women's and Children's Hospital in Chicago (1948) where she became an attending physician.

Most of her career was spent in private practice as an obstetrician/gynecologist in downtown Chicago and as an attending physician at Northwestern University Hospital, where she was an Assistant Professor Emeritus in Obstetrics and Gynecology. Dr. Stephens also served at various other hospitals including Cook County (now Stroger Hospital) where she volunteered for years at the maternity center.

It was during her years of practice that Dr. Stephens realized that rape victims were leaving the hospital in an emotionally worsened state than when they arrived. In 1974, Dr. Stephens founded Rape Victim Advocates in partnership with 10 medical students to offer nonjudgmental support services, 24 hours a day at a single hospital. [Dr. Susan Burke, one of the 10 founding medical students, shared this about Dr. Stephens with the Chicago Tribune](#), *"She was a champion for people who had very little voice. On a personal note, she taught me that I could make a difference in ways I never thought possible."*

Today, RVA responds to 11 hospitals across metropolitan Chicago and reaches more than 1,200 survivors of sexual violence each year through our comprehensive services as well as over 10,000 children, youth and adults through our prevention education work. Dr. Stephens continued her commitment to RVA throughout the years, serving as honorary chair for our 30th Anniversary Gala.

"As both a volunteer responding to crisis calls in the ER and a board member, I have seen the positive impact our services have on survivors. It is an honor to help lead and support an organization that is the direct result of Dr. Stephens' extraordinary vision and that makes a difference every single day." Julia Schmidt, RVA's Board President.

Dr. Stephens was preceded in death by her husband, Lawrence L. Turner, in 1998; survived by her sister, Janet Hutton; her son, Stephen Turner; her daughter, Martha Turner; and four grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held on March 17, 2012 at the Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ in Sanibel, FL. A tribute to Dr. Stephens will also take place in June at RVA's Visionary Awards Gala.