



**Mental Health Association  
in Michigan**

**LETTER FROM LANSING**

~a monthly public policy newsletter from the Mental Health Association in Michigan (MHAM)~

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Vol. 1, No. 8

August 2018

**Loss of a Legend**

The mental health and human service communities were deeply saddened by the Aug. 5 passing of C. Patrick (Pat) Babcock at age 77. He was a giant in the field and served for many years on our board.

Pat directed five state offices/departments: Drug Abuse & Alcoholism; Services to the Aging; Labor; Mental Health; and Human Services. He worked effectively for both Democratic and Republican Governors. That skillful bi-partisan ability was a great reflection on Pat, but also representative of different times and political climates. In the 1990s, Pat became disenchanted with one of the political party's actions on mental health and other health care. He also recognized that partisanship had become a hammer in Lansing.

After leaving state government, Pat became director of public policy for the Kellogg Foundation, where he served till his retirement in 2005. The year before, Governor Granholm tapped Pat and Wally Prechter (World Heritage Foundation & Prechter Family Fund) to co-chair a special state commission on mental health. Pat and Wally did an admirable job in circumstances that were most challenging and difficult.

Soon after, Pat joined our board and made major contributions to our work. Among them, Pat was a driving force in the establishment of our mental health-and-justice coalition, *Partners in Crisis*, which still exists today. Except for a brief break in parts of 2015-16, Pat served on our Board till his passing.

Pat was a fountain of wisdom, experience and temperament. When he disagreed with someone, he said so, and gave his reasons, plainly and calmly. There was no malice in his arguments. He didn't put you on the defensive, and you had to give strong consideration to his counsel.

While directing state mental health, Pat oversaw critical transitions from institutional to community care. While he later said he'd like to have a few decisions back (who among us wouldn't?), he is widely recognized as having done an outstanding job. Pat had great compassion; he often said he wanted state-funded services to be of a quality that he could be comfortable having a family member experience them.

We honored Pat with two awards: Snyder-Kok (exemplary service by a public official) and Citizen Advocacy. He received numerous other state and national awards and recognition. We will take additional steps to memorialize him.

Pat had an ability few of us possess: To make the bureaucratic wheels of state government bend and move. He once told a member of our staff that he had even learned how to identify and communicate with Governor's "spies" in his departments. He was brilliant and caring, open to debate and public accountability, and willing to change his positions if your points were persuasive enough.

At our recent Tribute Dinner honoring Tom Watkins, Pat was slated to introduce Tom. He was greatly looking forward to doing so, but his health was deteriorating and it just wasn't possible. Yet despite his difficulties, Pat made sure he transmitted a contribution supporting the event. He insisted that we let him know how it went, which we did.

At Pat's request, there was no funeral and will not be a memorial service. Pat went out the way he wanted, simply and with dignity. He will be greatly missed and always remembered. When you lose an all-time great, there is a knot in your stomach and a void in your heart. Our deepest condolences are extended to Pat's family.

***Letter from Lansing*** is published monthly by MHAM. The primary mode of distributing the newsletter is electronic mail, but we will postal-mail copies to persons lacking Internet access. If you've come across this issue through a friend or colleague and wish to subscribe (there is no charge), kindly let us know. If at any point you wish to unsubscribe, simply contact our office.

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