

## Legacy Circle Profile: Esther Carpenter



Esther Carpenter was born in 1913, the daughter of a self-educated businessman. She graduated from The University of Cincinnati with a BA in sociology and economics in 1934, after only three years. She completed a Masters degree at The New York School of Social Work at Columbia University.

When she moved to Annapolis in 1940, she became the Director of the Department of Social Services for Anne Arundel County, which was just starting to offer basic services. Twenty-five years later, upon her retirement, the Department had over 350 employees and had diversified its programming under her leadership.

Esther became an active Unitarian in her new Maryland home. She found it a pleasure to be around like-minded people. She chaired the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis in the 1950s, when it was just starting out as the Annapolis Fellowship.

Esther also found time to volunteer in the community. “I wanted my volunteer work to be in line with what I believed in and what I worked for,” she explains. Her two favorite causes quickly became the YWCA and Planned Parenthood of Maryland (PPM). She served on both boards and in a variety of capacities.

“You don’t need to be a social worker to see what happens when a person has more children than she can afford,” declares Esther. “It’s really quite logical.”

PPM opened a health center in Annapolis in the 1970s, which was greeted with active, and sometimes violent protests. Esther took on the role of coordinating the clinic escorts when the staff was still small.

She remembers a group of eight protesters who entered the health center and chained themselves to the chairs. And of course she cannot forget the bombing of the Annapolis center in the mid-1980s.

“I was gratified to be affiliated with Planned Parenthood so early in the game. I was directed toward preventing unwanted children, as opposed to dealing with the trauma of children brought up by parents who didn’t want them. That was a situation I saw frequently in my day job,” Esther recounts. “I also remember my own experience. When I wanted access to birth control in the 1930s, it was a nightmare trying to get it because I wasn’t married.”

Having no children and now widowed twice, Esther decided that she wants her estate would benefit both the Annapolis community, her home for over 50 years, and her two favorite charities. She took out a life insurance policy and named PPM and the YWCA as her beneficiaries. “One of the pleasures of not having children is the choice to support causes I care about. That makes me feel good,” she says with a smile.

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