



Untie the Elderly[®]

a program to eliminate physical and chemical restraints in health care settings

Sponsored by The Kendal Corporation
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania
Volume 14, No. 2 • Late Autumn 2003

Jill A. Blakeslee Remembered

Earlier this year, the field of gerontology lost a strong advocate and leader with the passing of Jill Blakeslee, former director of the *Untie the Elderly* program. In 1973, Jill came to the Kendal organization as the first director of nursing with the outrageous concept and belief that older people should be able to live out their lives with dignity, independence, and self esteem regardless of their physical or mental condition. Her quest was to provide quality care to the elderly in long term care settings without the use of the most undignified device—physical restraints.

Thankfully, Jill's personal mission was in sync with the Values and Standards of the Kendal organization, its executive Director, Lloyd Lewis, and the board of directors. Although the nationally accepted practice was to use physical restraints in an effort to keep the elderly safe—a practice not supported by research—the Kendal team took a radical step and supported Jill's mission to show that more humane solutions could be implemented without tying elderly people to their beds and to their chairs. While Kendal staff struggled with challenging situations, they never wavered in their belief that the non-use of physical restraints was the best practice to achieve optimal outcomes for each person.

With ongoing support of the Kendal board, Jill set out to change the standard of care for the nation's elderly by co-sponsoring a symposium, "Untie the Elderly: Quality Care Without Restraints," with the Senate Special Committee on Aging on December 4, 1989. This Capitol Hill educational forum laid the groundwork for providers, advocates, regulatory agencies and academicians to proceed down the path of safer, resident-focused quality care for the nation's elderly.

Untie the Elderly dedicates this issue to its founder. For those of you who didn't know Jill personally, the following excerpts from colleagues and friends will give you a better of understanding of this outstanding crusader.

It was my privilege to have had Jill as a close friend, colleague and mentor for the past seventeen years. I had hoped for the opportunity of working closely with her in a collegial fashion long before I actually joined the Kendal family and then was so delighted to work by her side until her retirement in 1991. Her vision and dedication to the field of aging enlightened and guided many of us. For those of us who knew Jill personally, we will remember her as a determined woman . . . one who believed in people and always was willing to nourish and support them.

Jill relentlessly pushed to improve the quality of care delivered in our nation's long term care facilities. With Jill's leadership, determination, and perseverance, conditions in nursing homes across the country have been vastly improved.

Beryl Goldman, Director for Outreach, The Kendal Corporation



Jill Blakeslee was a true pioneer and her work exemplified the very essence of NCCNHR's mission: "To protect the rights, safety and dignity of residents." What is more basic than freedom to move at will? Jill's crusade was based on her own successful practice at Kendal. Her steady determination to rid the country of restraints freed hundreds of thousands of residents. Her work is an enduring reminder that the job is not complete and we must use her legacy to guide us in banishing restraint use from long term care forever.

Sarah Greene Burger, Long Term Care Consultant; formerly Executive Director, National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (NCCNHR)

Let us hear about your challenges and successes. We invite you to submit an article for publication to **Untie the Elderly**, P. O. Box 100, Kennett Square, PA 19348. Deadline for next issue is April 30, 2004.

Visit our Web site at: www.ute.kendal.org

Little did I know as I was being interviewed by Jill Blakeslee in September of 1974, that it would take me, eventually, into a national movement to *Untie the Elderly*. Jill became my mentor and close friend. Never had I met someone who was so dedicated to making the final years of life as comfortable as possible. Jill never swayed from her belief that there was always a better way to meet the needs of the individual, rather than resort to restraints or medication. She was a gentle woman with a huge heart. I feel privileged to have worked with her and miss her very much.

Betty Zeller, former Director of Nursing/Administrator (retired), Kendal/Crosslands Communities



Early years for the Untie the Elderly team: front row, left to right, Dawn Papougenis, Curt Torell, Betty Zeller. Back row, left to right, Beryl Goldman, Mary Scharf, Jill Blakeslee.

I attended a seminar on restraint reduction at The Kendal Corporation in 1989 and as a young gerontologist was extremely impressed with the effort of Jill Blakeslee and her colleagues regarding removing physical restraints from nursing home residents. As an immigrant from another country, I had never seen older people being physically restrained. It was very upsetting.

Jill inspired me to take the philosophy of restraint-free care back to Menorah Park Center for the Aging where I worked as a Research Associate with Dr. Steven Folmar. Both of us became committed to implementing restraint reduction and evaluating its outcomes. With funding from a Cleveland Foundation grant, we began examining the removal of physical restraints at our facility and another local nursing home. Jill helped us with this project and soon we saw tremendous successes, so much so that we applied for another Cleveland Foundation grant to removal physical restraints from seven nursing homes in the area. Jill was a true inspiration, a warm and caring human being who tirelessly spread the message of improving the quality of life of the frailest and oldest members of our society. She will be sorely missed but her message has gone beyond her to become an integral part of quality care in nursing homes around the country.

Farida K. Ejaz, Senior Research Associate, Margaret Blenkner Research Institute, Benjamin Rose

We owe Jill so much— her love was made visible for all human kind.

Astrid Dorsey, Associate Director Public Relations, The Kendal Corporation

We were saddened to hear of the passing of long-time supporter and friend Jill A. Blakeslee. A life-long activist and supporter within the long term care arena, Ms. Blakeslee was the founding director of what has now become *Untie the Elderly*, an ongoing national program that educates nursing homes to operate restraint free. Her dedication and passion to the service of long term care and, in particular, her commitment to restraint-free care, will not be forgotten.

Spectrum of March 31, 2003—a publication of the Pennsylvania Association of Non-profit Homes for the Aged (PANPHA)

Jill is an inspiration to all of us who've worked on the restraint elimination initiative. We were touched by our meetings and conversations with her over the years.

Neil Beresin, Regional Director, Pennsylvania Restraint Reduction Initiative (PARRI)

Jill Blakeslee did so much for enlightening us on quality and bringing restraint-free environments to the nation.

Susan Ganson, Director Quality and Education, CARF, Continuing Care Accreditation Commission (CCAC)

In many ways Jill personified many Quaker principles. In her plain spoken way she put into practice her belief in essential individual dignity. The use of restraints in caring for ill persons, she felt, was counter to this belief. Jill had no illusions concerning the difficulties of bringing these ideas into practice. Fortunately, she met Lloyd Lewis, another visionary who shared her ideas, and together they overcame the standards of care practiced at that time and made restraint-free care a reality.

Berdelle Jacobson Shipman, former Administrator (retired), Kendal at Longwood

I had the privilege of working with Jill Blakeslee and the *Untie the Elderly* project through the 1980s. It was at that time that Jill took the restraint-free message "on the road" and was faced initially with tremendous resistance and disbelief.

Few outsiders realized that it was Jill's compassion for the elderly and her determination never to bound an older person that were the underlying factors that created such an environment. Jill faced many challenges with some difficult residents (and staff) but each time successfully avoided the debilitating consequences of restraint use. Her empathy for all older people, as well as the staff who cared for them, helped convince skeptics. Not only did their use of restraints change, but their perceptions of residents also became more personal, individualistic, and humane. They learned alternatives to restraints, and this had an impact on the way they saw their residents. Thanks to Jill. Next came her testimony to the Senate Subcommittee on Aging and the eventual legislation that greatly restricted restraint use. This momentum could not stop as Jill led her team tirelessly from door to door to educate the nation about a "better way" to care for the elderly. The preconceived myths of restraints came tumbling down. It was a joy to share these milestones with Jill and an honor to see her dream of a restraint-free facility move so pervasively to a restraint-free nation. All credit goes to this person of vision, integrity, sincerity, compassion, humility, and determination. If any one person can be credited with freeing the elderly from the indignation and debilitation of restraints, it should be Jill Blakeslee.

Curt Torell, Ph.D., Past Director of Education and Organizational Development, Kendal



Jill addresses the U.S. Senate Symposium in 1989.

Pennswood Village would like to recognize Jill Blakeslee's important contribution to the health care of the older adult. She was certainly a pioneer and it is wonderful that The Kendal Corporation continues to teach individuals in health care about the *Untie the Elderly* philosophy. It certainly has made a difference. I am sorry for your loss of this very special colleague. She left a great legacy.

Pat Smith, Director of Health Services, Pennswood Village

Jill Blakeslee was one of the principal architects of Kendal's *Values and Standards*. Her determination not to physically restrain our skilled nursing care residents was a cornerstone both as a Value and as a Standard in our communities. Most important, Jill gave Kendal a mission outside ourselves. The use of physical restraints desperately needed to be abolished in most of the nation's nursing homes. Jill rose eagerly to this opportunity. Against stubborn resistance, she achieved remarkable and continuing practical results. Kendal owes to Jill its beginning as an organization which included among its purposes reaching out to benefit the nation's elderly.

Alan R. Hunt, Esquire, The Kendal Corporation Board member and past president (retired)

Jill hired me more than 20 years ago as the assistant to the Resident Care Nurse. When my supervisor was on sick leave, I went to Jill with concerns. She always put me at ease and was a great listener and problem solver. One of my fondest memories is of Jill dressing as a clown for our one-day seminar, *Laughter is the Best Medicine*. The day was a huge success and Jill loved every minute of it. She was a great leader and an inspiration to all of us.

Barbara Cahill, LPN, Resident Care Director, Kendal at Longwood



Through her workshops, Jill helped caregivers adopt safe care practices.

Long before any of us approached the thorny problem of restraint use, Jill Blakeslee recognized its cruelty and inhumanity, and worked tirelessly to raise the awareness that no one should live or die this way. For those of us who tackled the problem from a research perspective, we found in her commitment a reinforcement for our inspiration to push on, and to demonstrate that there was no clinical evidence that such practices worked. All who knew her take comfort and satisfaction from her dedication and her capacity to slowly but surely help remake the world for frail elders everywhere.

Lois Evans, Viola MacInnes/Independence Professor, and Neville Strumpf, Edith Clemmer Steinbright Professor in Gerontology, University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing

While I did not know Jill personally, I feel like I do through the eyes of other Kendal staff. I can certainly feel her presence everyday in our Kendal practices. My sympathy to all who were inspired by her vision and wisdom over her many years at Kendal.

Barbara Thomas, Executive Director, Kendal at Oberlin

I was saddened to learn of Jill's death. She was a passionate advocate for the dignity of older people. I considered her to be one of my most important mentors, and I hope that my professional activities will serve to promote her ideals.

Gary Winzelberg, MD, MPH, Assistant Professor at the UNC School of Medicine Program on Aging (POA) and the Division of General Medicine

Jill hired me 25 years ago and was a wonderful example to follow. She encouraged me to continue my education and in 1988 I received my RN. She made me see that you 'can do' whatever you set your mind to. I will never forget her.

Sandra Scott, RN, Kendal at Longwood

Dick and I remember Jill Blakeslee with great respect, affection and appreciation for her many contributions to the establishment of Kendal. Jill **insisted** from the very beginning that no resident was to be tied down or restrained physically or medically. She was ahead of other nursing homes back then. Her efforts in that direction resulted in what *Untie the Elderly* has become. Jill was great with staff and a very nice person to know and with whom to be associated. God bless her.

Sally Worth, Founder/Board Member/Resident, Kendal at Longwood

When I first started working at Kendal in 1979, I couldn't believe that a restraint free atmosphere was possible. I learned quickly that it was a reality. Over the years we encountered numerous situations which really required innovative solutions to meet the restraint-free requirement. Whenever we went to Jill saying, "We just don't know how we can do it this time," she would reply in her very soft, patient voice, "There must be a way. Think about it a little more." By using a team effort, a solution was always found. I'll always remember Jill as a person who set a wonderful example for other nurses and who made my 20 years of nursing at Kendal a total enjoyment.

Sandy Cunningham, RN, Kendal at Longwood (retired)

As you read these tributes, those of you who didn't know her personally should have a good sense of her character and career accomplishments. Having worked for Jill for 14 years, I got to know her very well on a personal and professional level. In summary, Jill was a caring, compassionate crusader who believed in and practiced the 'team concept.' She saw the uniqueness in individuals and considered each and every member of her staff an expert in their sphere of interest. I feel honored to have had the privilege of knowing and of working with Jill and am proud to have been a small part of her accomplishments.

Mary Scharf, Health Services Administrative Assistant, The Kendal Corporation



Jill received the Award of Excellence from the Pennsylvania Association of Homes and Services for the Aging in 1990. Left to right: Beryl Goldman, Jill Blakeslee, Lloyd Lewis.

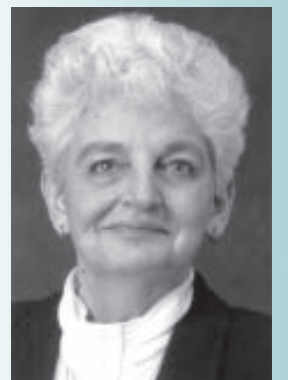
In conclusion:

Numerous advances have been made in long term care since Jill's arrival at Kendal in 1973 but there is so much more to do.

We hope this publication has given those of you who didn't know Jill or her accomplishments a sense of the commitment she made to assuring freedom and autonomy to the frail elderly. The success of her work is evident when one looks at the national restraint usage in 1988 (41%) compared to today's rate (9%).

Jill's crusade led to other accomplishments by the Untie the Elderly initiative, including development of quality resource materials on safe, restraint-free practices; two successful demonstration projects on restraint elimination and the implementation of a grant-funded, nine-year program, the Pennsylvania Restraint Reduction Initiative, to remove physical and chemical restraints in the state's long-term care facilities. Staff have offered more than 310 programs on restraint elimination, behavioral issues and falls to more than 11,360 clinicians, advocates, providers and families across the country.

Although Jill's belief was that the elimination of physical restraints was the single most important care practice to improve quality care in our nation's health facilities, she recognized that it was just the first of many quality initiatives that needed to occur. To address that broader mission, we have been instrumental in both the Pennsylvania Best Practices project and the Ohio Models to Improve Care program, grant-funded projects by their respective Departments of Health. Kendal nurse educators have been training test facilities in such best practice protocols as activities of daily living, pain, depression and hydration, with outstanding outcomes.



Untie the Elderly continues to grow...

With this issue, *Untie the Elderly* ceases publication of a printed newsletter. In the future, the newsletter will be available electronically through the *Untie the Elderly* web site. For those who cannot access the newsletter on the web, we will provide a Xeroxed copy via mail. To request a hard copy, contact Mary Scharf at 610-388-5580, or via e-mail at mscharf@kcorp.kendal.org.

At this stage, we are going beyond the initial thrust of eliminating physical restraints to focus more on Jill's far-reaching vision of quality care for older people. To further this important work and to honor Jill's legacy, the annual **Jill Blakeslee Memorial Lecture Series** has been established to identify, promote, and replicate quality improvement initiatives that are occurring in the United States and abroad.

Contributions in Jill's name are being accepted to support this endeavor and to help us secure outstanding leaders in the field of aging who will present innovative concepts and care techniques to clinicians and researchers. We plan to provide contributors copies of each presentation, either electronically or hard copy.

You can help to fulfill Jill's mission by making your tax-deductible donation payable to:

Kendal Outreach, LLC

Mail to:

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P. O. Box 100

Kennett Square, PA 19348



Best wishes for a peaceful, happy holiday season.

REMINDERS

For a copy of our new catalogue on Quality Care Resource Tools, visit our website at www.ute.kendal.org, or call 610-388-5580 for a hard copy.

Visit our web site at www.ute.kendal.org.

Keep abreast of the Pennsylvania Restraint Reduction Initiative's activities by visiting their website at www.parri.kendal.org.

Untie the Elderly[®]
published by The Kendal Corporation,
a not-for-profit organization whose
mission is to establish and operate
committees and services for older
people in accordance with the
principles of the Religious Society of
Friends (Quakers).
The Kendal Corporation
P.O. Box 100
Kennett Square, PA 19348
(610) 388-5580
Beryl D. Goldman
Director of *Untie the Elderly*
Lisa Lynch Sweeney
Editor