



# TOVA Cares

## Healthy Tidbits

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### Celebrating a Beloved Social Worker

This March, we celebrated National Social Worker's Month, a profession missioned to care for others and relieve human suffering (NASW, 1973). To commemorate this occasion, TOVA honors Delaware's beloved Alice Coleman, LCSW, of Smith-Coleman Counseling. Before matriculating from Delaware State College (DSU) with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology, Alice planned to obtain a Master's of Social Work degree from the prestigious Atlanta University, now known as Clark Atlanta University (CAU), until a sudden accident redirected her plans.

In 1962, Alice suffered from an automobile accident, causing *tetraplegia* (paralysis). Instead of pursuing graduate studies, Alice was treated for one year at the Delaware Division of Wilmington Hospital, where she developed mobility within a wheelchair. Thereafter, Alice pursued graduate school and applied to CAU. Upon realization of the institution's lack of handicap accessible services, Alice applied to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). It was here where Alice was challenged to complete an agility test to determine her ability to self-sufficiently navigate the campus grounds. With impression, Alice passed the test and was admitted. She completed the Master's of Social Work degree from UIUC in less than two years, while serving on the Gizz Kids Cheerleading Squad, who she traveled to Hawaii with for the National Wheelchair Basketball Tournament.

In 1969, Alice was employed at the Delaware State Hospital (Delaware Psychiatric Center) as a Social Worker II, where she served individuals with severe mental illnesses who were "unable to make sense of the world around them and, to an extent, function." From Social Worker II to the first Black American Director of Psychiatric Social Services, Alice became a champion for the rights of those unable to advocate for themselves. When it comes to mental health, Alice learned "it doesn't matter about education or where you are in life," as she served women and men across the life span (and social ladder). Once she resigned, Alice practiced full-time as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in her private practice, Smith-Coleman Counseling. While a social work clinician, Alice was also a devoted wife to Norwood Coleman, Sr. and a loving mother of two sons, Norwood, Jr. and Michael. As a relentless community advocate, she served on the Advocacy Committee for the Visually Impaired, the National Association of Social Workers' Delaware chapter, and the Delaware Workforce Investment Board (to name only a few). We honor Alice, whose life experiences epitomize *resilience*. **Cionie Lum, BSW**



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