

Remembering Jill Barrett

by Bernie Michel

Word came late last week that Jill Barrett had passed on. While I had not seen her in person for a while, my first thought was that this seemed sudden. When I did see her images on Facebook, she and David both seemed to be doing well. At the wake last Saturday, David confirmed that it was very sudden, five weeks from diagnosis to passing. Jill was one of those people we come to count on to get things done. Committed to Hartford and its neighborhoods, thoughtful and knowledgeable about the issues and solutions. She was always soft spoken, though her words carried weight. My connection to her in Asylum Hill was mostly at Fitzgerald and Halliday where she worked on several streetscape projects, as well as the I-84 Project and its many meetings.

She was also the staff for Farmington Avenue Alliance that helped to connect Asylum Hill and the West End in the effort to revitalize this important thoroughfare. More than once, I called her looking for information about some property on the avenue, or why things were the way they were. She generally had the information or insight I was seeking on the spot and generously shared it. So this was the side of Jill that I knew.

Her [obituary](#) appeared in the Hartford Courant on July 23rd. Not surprisingly, from that I learned a few things about her that I didn't know.

After getting a Masters Degree in Community Organizing from the University of Connecticut School of Social Work, she began work at Asylum Hill Inc., as one of the early organizers. By the time I arrived in Asylum Hill she had left that organization and it was fading just as AHNA was coming into existence.

I also learned of her love of rowing on the Connecticut River and her connection with Riverfront Recapture, but also that she was a world traveler and likely as a result was dedicated to immigrant and refugee resettlement with Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS). Both of these organizations have been recommended to receive donations in her memory. Both have in common a mission to make this world a better place for its inhabitants. For me, that is her legacy.

