



R.I.P. “Feisty Fighter” Frankie Franklin-Foxx

In 1988, she was a founding member of the Chicago Women’s AIDS Project.

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Frankie Franklin-Foxx, who learned she had HIV in the 1980s and became an early advocate for other women with the virus in Chicago, died of a heart attack on December 13, 2023 . She was 68, according to an obituary on InclusiveFuneralCare.com posted by her family, which added: “She will be remembered as a very strong and outgoing character— a feisty fighter!”

In 1988, Franklin-Foxx became one of the first members of the first support group for HIV-positive women in Chicago. She was a client and peer counselor and served on the board of directors. She was also active with the Women’s Interagency HIV Study, the nation’s largest observational study of women living with or at risk of contracting HIV. (Funded by the NIH and launched in 1993, the multisite study is ongoing.)

A long-term survivor, Franklin-Foxx was interviewed by Oprah Winfrey and Dan Rather. And a panel on the AIDS Memorial Quilt is dedicated to her.

“She was one of the longest-lived members of that early group of women who came together and said, ‘We have to take care of each other, speak out, support each other,’” Catherine Christeller, founder and executive director of the Chicago Women’s AIDS Project, told the Chicago Sun Times.

Christeller recalled that the group rented space in a cobalt-blue Victorian- style home in Edgewater. “We started with one room and expanded to take over most of the building,” Christeller said. “It was old and drafty, but there was room for the women to meet and for their children to play, and there was a big kitchen for hot lunch, and we did Thanksgiving and Christmas and Mother’s Day.”

Effective HIV treatment didn’t become available until the mid-’90s. Stigma, fear and misinformation prevailed during the early years of the epidemic, and few were willing to be the face of the disease. Franklin-Foxx was an exception, outspoken and willing to attend rallies and advocate for public policy and funds.

