



R.I.P. Frankie Franklin-Foxx, a “Feisty Fighter” for Women With HIV

In the 1980s, Frankie Franklin-Foxx became active in the support group Chicago Women’s AIDS Project.

January 16, 2024 By [Trent Straube](#)

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 December 13, 2023, of a heart attack. She was 68, according to an [obituary posted by her family on InclusiveFuneralCare.com](#), which added: “She will be remembered as a very strong and outgoing character—a feisty fighter!”

In 1988, she became a founding member of the Chicago Women’s AIDS Project, a support group for HIV-positive women. She was a client and peer counselor and served on the board of directors. Franklin-Foxx was also active with [Women’s Interagency HIV Study](#), the nation’s largest observational study of women living with or at risk of contracting HIV. (Funded by the National Institutes of Health and launched in 1993, the multisite study is ongoing.)

As a long-term survivor, Franklin-Foxx was interviewed by Oprah Winfrey and Dan Rather. And she has a panel on the [AIDS Memorial Quilt](#).

“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 lifesaving HIV treatment didn’t arrive until 1996. Stigma, fear and misinformation prevailed during the early years of the epidemic, and few people were willing to be the public face of the disease. Franklin-Foxx was an exception, outspoken and willing to attend rallies and advocate for public policy and funds.

“She really put her all into having people’s backs when no one else would, and she lost friend after friend after friend after friend,” her daughter Jolynn told the Sun Times. “She was relentless when

it came to, 'This is my voice; I don't care how you feel about it.' And she would say what no one would say. She was an intense force."

Born Waverlynn Franklin and raised in the South Side, she fled to the North Side and held numerous jobs throughout her life, including switchboard operator and medical technician. She had three daughters and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The family asks that donations be made in her name to the Chicago Women's AIDS Project at cwapchicago.org.

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