R.I.P. Shawn Lang, Longtime HIV and LGBTQ Advocate in Connecticut

Shawn Lang worked at AIDS Connecticut. She also fought for LGBTQ rights and for people dealing with opioid addiction and domestic violence.

October 20, 2021 By Trent Straube

Shawn Lang, a well-known Connecticut AIDS activist for over 30 years who also championed LGBTQ equality and fought for other marginalized people, died unexpectedly Sunday, October 17, 2021, reports the Hartford Courant. She was 65. A cause of death was not listed.

“There is no doubt that Shawn Lang has made a lasting impact on Connecticut,” the state’s governor, Ned Lamont, said in a press statement. “She dedicated her life toward giving a voice for the underrepresented and those in marginalized communities, and I am confident that generations to come will benefit from her advocacy. I extend my deepest condolences to her family and friends. While her passing comes with incredible sadness, I am thankful that Connecticut has had someone as passionate and dedicated as her working to make our state more welcoming and more accessible for everyone.”

As WTNH.com News 8 notes in the segment above, Lang also advocated for people experiencing housing insecurity, domestic violence and opioid addiction. As an AIDS United blog post in POZ noted in 2016, Lang was a longtime board member of the National AIDS Housing Commission, which worked to provide stable housing for people living with HIV.

Lang was already active in the fight for LGBTQ equality in the early 1980s when AIDS first struck. HIV/AIDS became a major cause she rallied for. In 1991, she began working at AIDS Connecticut (now a division of Advancing CT Together), where until recently she was the deputy director, a role that had her collaborating with legislators and politicians on public policy, according to the Hartford Courant.

“Shawn Lang’s passion and courage were boundless, and her impact endless, as a leader and advocate for fundamental human rights,” said her friend U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal, in the paper. “She stood up and spoke out unstintingly and ceaselessly for so many who are demeaned or disregarded, inspiring others to do the same.”

“She would call herself a warrior for what she called her brothers and sisters who had fallen from

AIDS or who were battling the disease," added John Merz, Lang's former supervisor and the current CEO of Advancing CT Together.

Lang is survived by a son, Corbett Lang, who is 24. He described his mother to the newspaper as someone who "would always stick up for the weakest person, no matter what the situation was."

In related news, AIDS Walk 2021, a fundraiser for AIDS Connecticut and Advancing CT Together, will be held Saturday, October 30.

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