

**Award:** Lifetime Achievement Award  
**Recipient:** Jan Anderson  
**Presenter:** Claudia Lennhoff

It is truly my great honor to be presenting the Lifetime Achievement Award to my friend and hero, Jan Anderson.

The Lifetime Achievement Award is rare and special – yet, paradoxically, it has no financial value whatsoever. This award is rare because it recognizes someone for a body of work over a lifetime.

Jan Anderson is a retired nurse and has been a health care activist all her adult life.

As she stands here beside me, she looks like a nice lady – like someone who you wouldn't expect to rock the boat and cause trouble. And she is a nice lady! One of the nicest you could hope to meet.

But Jan is absolutely someone who has and will rock the boat and who has caused the best kind of trouble. In fact, people who know her, know that she is a force of nature and when she sets her sights, there is no stopping her.

She is a force of nature, not like a hurricane or an earthquake, but more like a gentle stream that steadily carves and shapes the rock that surrounds it.

Jan's activism has helped make Champaign County healthier. There are programs and services that exist, in part, as a result of her efforts.

There is no way that I can do justice to all of Jan's great work in this presentation. One cannot do justice to a lifetime of work in a 4 minute presentation, but I want to try to tell you about who Jan Anderson is to us, and to me, at Health Care Consumers.

Jan has been part of many important health care movement efforts in our community over the decades. She worked at Burnham City Hospital and was part of the effort to organize the nurses at Burnham.

First, the nurses tried to form a committee to establish nursing protocols. But the nurses were accused of wanting to administer the hospital.

The nurses also fought to gain recognition as a collective bargaining unit under the Illinois Nurses Association. Jan proudly signed her membership card, and she and other nurses went on strike after another nurse was fired.

The strike in 1970 didn't succeed and Jan and several other nurses lost their jobs.

After that, Jan went into private nursing, and then worked for 17 years in the office of an independent local physician, Dr. Charles Shepardson.

Jan was part of many of Health Care Consumers efforts over the years, including the campaign to establish midwifery services in Champaign County.

I met Jan in 1995, when Health Care Consumers was organizing the Friends of Public Health Coalition in order to establish a county-wide public health department through voter referendum.

Jan was an important leader and hard worker in that struggle. She showed up to all the meetings, she went door to door, she spoke to groups about the importance of public health. She used her knowledge as a health care professional to help others understand the importance of public health and the services it could provide.

Jan was the kind of leader who led by example. She never sought the limelight, and she was always kind and patient and diligent. She supported others in their efforts, and she always entered the room with a smile, making everyone feel glad that they showed up for that meeting.

Once the public health referendum passed in November 1996, we had to do the hard work of implementing the will of the voters. Unfortunately, this required that the County Board take certain administrative steps in order to bring the County Health Department to life. At that time, the County Board was dominated and over-represented by rural Republicans who did everything they could to try to stall and kill the health department because they opposed a new property tax to pay for these vital services. If the health department was going to see the light of day, we would need pro-public health folks on the County Board.

And so, Jan was pressed into service to go into public office. She never aspired to public office – it was merely an extension of the work that she needed to do to make public health a reality for Champaign County residents.

Jan ran for the Champaign County Board in 2000, and served through 2012. She first ran as a Democrat in a district that was 60 percent Republican, and wound up the top vote-getter.

While serving on the County Board, Jan put her health care knowledge to work. She helped bring to life the Child Dental Access Program – which eventually became SmileHealthy – and she served as the liaison to the County Mental Health Board. She also served five years on the County Nursing Home Board.

Jan's work has helped to improve the health and the lives of tens of thousands of Champaign County residents over many decades and across many generations. Most people who have benefitted from her work will never know her name. But that's not why she did it.

But Jan probably does not realize how many of us she influenced, and taught, and inspired and showed the way.

Jan is one of the truest and best people I know, and I know that I've been so fortunate to have been able to work with her for many years.

I was speaking to Sheila Ferguson, the CEO of Community Elements about Jan. Sheila is really sad that she couldn't be here this evening for Jan's recognition, but this is what she had to say about Jan:

"Jan is one of my favorite people and she probably doesn't even know it. She is so humble and caring and always willing to take the time to understand and help. She made a big impression on me over the years and when I think of her I smile because she was always there in the background watching out for those that are vulnerable and too often overlooked by others. I always valued her opinion. The funny thing is that she likely doesn't even know how she has influenced some of us."

In case any of you are wondering – Jan's work isn't done. She may have slowed down a little bit, but she's going to keep fighting the good fight, and I'm sure glad to have her in our corner!

Jan, thank you for your lifetime dedication to health care justice. You have made an immeasurable impact on our community. On behalf of the Champaign County Health Care Consumers, it is my great honor to be able to present you with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Congratulations and thank you!