

Lifetime service to welfare of children

Pam Croxford gave a lifetime of service to the welfare of children and the promotion of a just society. The Christchurch woman continued to work almost to the day she died, two weeks ago. She was 59.

A friend said Croxford's unfailing commitment to peace, justice, workers' rights, children's safety, children with disabilities and support for parents showed a sharp mind and a gift for policy work.

Croxford's course seemed set when, as a student at St Margaret's College, she won a Commonwealth essay competition on racial oppression.

Born Pam Chaplin, she attended St Margaret's on a scholarship, after primary school at Belfast. She studied at Canterbury University on a teacher-training studentship and qualified as a teacher at Christchurch Teachers' College. She then moved to Auckland, where she mixed in the Student Christian Movement and social-protest circles, becoming active in the anti-Vietnam War movement and anti-apartheid demonstrations.



Pam Croxford

She became friendly with John Croxford, whom she later married. Together they attended the first Vietnam protest march in Christchurch. Among her contributions

to protests were the making of banners and (as a licensed projectionist) the showing of films — a legacy of her teacher training.

When John returned to his native England, Pam moved to Wellington. There she fitted easily into the "bohemian" set, until John came back and they married.

They settled in a one-roomed flat in Auckland, with their first child. The baby was put in a creche so Pam could work as a postie to help with the parlous finances. The difficulties this posed led Pam to campaign with the Auckland City Council for a free child-care creche.

The family increased to three

sons and Pam and John bought their first house, in Te Atatu North. Pam loved the multicultural community. She became involved in the play centre, eventually becoming supervisor. It was the beginning of a long career in child care.

The family moved to Christchurch in 1976. Pam gained qualifications in child care, while supervisor at Mairehau Play Centre, and then as founding supervisor at Parklands.

She next worked for Barnardos, as manager establishing family day care in Christchurch. In 1986, she became supervisor of the Cathedral Square creche (now at Tuam Street). Her professionalism in establishing guidelines and practices, passion for the protection of children and compassion and warmth led to election as national president and life member of the NZ Childcare Association.

Pam had a long-term problem with asthma, so the family moved to Kaiapoi for the cleaner air. With her sons at school there, she played a full part in school affairs. She served on the Kaiapoi High School board of

governors from 1983 to 1992, including time as deputy chairman, when she helped steer the transition of Tomorrow's Schools and change to a board of trustees.

While doing this, she completed her arts degree at Canterbury University and post-graduate studies in early-childhood education by correspondence from Massey.

She next worked as executive director of the YWCA in Christchurch, fostering after-school programmes to develop the potential of children. In 1989 she began seven years of work for CCS, first as children's and young persons' services manager and then as general services manager responsible for Canterbury and the West Coast.

The family loved camping holidays, which began in financially tight times with staying in ungraded cabins at motor camps. Later, they graduated to tents and then to their own house at Hanmer Springs.

With the children grown, Pam and John moved to Takaka in 1998. Pam was a keen trumper and the couple set up a bed and breakfast

and guided-walks business. However, she was asked to become part of a Ministry of Education initiative and worked almost up to her death reviewing the needs of, and resources for, special education students.

Her manager, Margaret Parkin, said Pam wrote and administered the quality standards for early intervention providers.

"Her wide knowledge of the education sector and her deep understanding of the needs of children, together with her very special relationship skills, made her a very highly effective team member who will be irreplaceable," Parkin said.

Pam's courage in the face of cancer inspired awe in those who knew her. She attended a conference two weeks before her death.

—Mike Crean

● Pamela Margaret Croxford (nee Chaplin), born Christchurch, December 12, 1945; died Takaka, November 7, 2005; survived by husband John and sons William and Michael; pre-deceased by son Peter.