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Marciene Mattleman, 89, a feisty and unrelenting advocate for Philadelphia's children

by Andrew Maykuth, Updated: March 30, 2019



RON TARVER



Marciene Mattleman, 89, a feisty advocate for Philadelphia's children who created a legacy of programs to promote literacy and after-school activities, died Friday, March 29, after a four-year battle with Parkinson's disease.

"No one in this city has done more for the schoolchildren of Philadelphia and our region than Marciene Mattleman," former Gov. Ed Rendell said in 2015 [when she retired](#) as board chair of After School Activities Partnerships (ASAP), one of the organizations she created.

Mrs. Mattleman [began her career as a sixth-grade teacher](#) in Philadelphia, then earned a Ph.D. in education, writing her dissertation at night when her three children were sleeping. She worked as an education professor at Temple University.

When she was in her 50s, her career went in a new direction when she launched the Mayor's Commission for Literacy under Mayor W. Wilson Goode. Later she founded organizations called Youth Education for Tomorrow, Philadelphia Reads, Philadelphia Futures, and finally ASAP, a nonprofit aimed at facilitating after-school programs that help keep kids safe.



Marciene Mattleman greets former Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell in Philadelphia City Hall in May 2015.

Then-President Bill Clinton praised Philadelphia Futures, a college-oriented mentoring program, which has been replicated in other cities.

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After each organization achieved success, Mrs. Mattleman handed it over to others and turned her attention to another cause.

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Goode, with whom she remained in contact, once described her as “one of the most unselfish, dedicated public servants that I’ve known.”

Marciene (pronounced mar-SEEN) Mattleman was famously persistent, and in more than three decades, she built a network of contacts that was so extensive there is almost no one in city government or business she could not call to ask for a favor.

“My general policy is, whatever Marcienne is calling about, just say yes,” then-Mayor Michael Nutter said in 2015. “It saves you about half an hour, and you’re going to do it anyway.”

“She was so passionate about her work,” said daughter Barbara Mattleman. “If she was doing it, she was 1,000 percent in.”

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Marciene Mattleman and her husband, Herman, share a glass of wine in their home near Washington Square in 2008.

She grew up on Woodcrest Avenue in Wynnefield, where her father, a businessman, served as president of his synagogue. She was 16 years old when she met Herman Mattleman, four years her senior, who later became the Philadelphia school board president. They were married for more than 68 years.

Their three children all followed their parents into public service.

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She was a tireless fund-raiser and recruited thousands of volunteers to lead chess clubs and debate teams and teach hip-hop and yoga in after-school programs. The programs she created touched the lives of tens of thousands of students.

"A lot of kids in this city learned to read because of my mother," said daughter Ellen Mattleman Kaplan, the city's chief integrity officer. "It's really quite amazing."

She was the education reporter on KYW Newsradio, and often appeared in the media discussing education issues.

She served on numerous boards, including the Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation, the American Red Cross of Southeastern PA, Philadelphia Futures, City Year, the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia, the Jewish Community Relations Council, and the Audrey Miller Poritzky Fund for Education. She was elected a Distinguished Daughter of Pennsylvania and had served as a member of the Pennsylvania Commission for Women before her death.

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Mrs. Mattleman's After School Activities Partnerships (ASAP) programs helped schools start such programs as a chess club.

In 2008, [she received the Philadelphia Award](#), the city's highest civic honor, in recognition of her contributions to Philadelphia's underprivileged youth (her [husband also won the award](#), in 1991).

"I've had a huge amount of support, both emotional and financial, that enabled me to follow my instincts and act with independence," Mrs. Mattleman said in 2008. "There is an enormous satisfaction to help other people get what they want from life."

In addition to her husband and daughters, she is survived by a son, Jon; six grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Shiva will be observed at the family residence on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday at 7 p.m. Burial will be private. A memorial service will be at a later date.

Donations can be made to the Marcienne Mattleman Founder's Fund at After School Activities Partnerships at 1520 Locust St., Suite 1140, Philadelphia 19102, or to a charity of the donor's choice.



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