

From September, 1986 until her retirement in March, 2002, Margaret Gibbons graced this agency with her humanity, her keen skills as a social worker, and her extraordinarily effective service to our clients. Margaret, a former Catholic nun and deeply spiritual person, died this week at home in West Springfield. I remember her for her passionate belief that every client is a human being and is capable of reformation; a belief which was accompanied by a candid acknowledgment that reformation of the client cannot occur without insight, reflection, and hard work by the client. Margaret was unusually generous, and equally fearless. She thought nothing of driving a Springfield client into a Boston rehab program, or vice versa, and she did not shrink from confronting clients who lacked insight into the reasons for their legal dilemma. Within CPCS, she was a refreshing voice who was willing to challenge the ingrained lawyers' ways of thinking about client representation. In court, she had a knack for persuading recalcitrant judges to give a checkered client a further chance. For saving so many clients so many years of incarceration, Margaret was awarded the Joe Murphy Award for outstanding social worker performance in 2000.

When Margaret announced her intention to retire in 2002, after forty-two years of serving the needs of others, we saluted her "uncanny ability to perceive the humanity within each client, and [her] utter determination to stand the justice system upside down, if need be, to achieve a fair and just result for each client." For her part, in wishing her colleagues at CPCS the best, Margaret spoke with her typical prescience in warning us that "attitudinally, working for the defense of indigent clients may even become more unpopular." I hope people who worked with Margaret and valued her presence here will offer their reflections by clicking "reply all" and sharing their remembrances with us.

William J. Leahy
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