

The first time I heard about the Campaign for Real Choice, I was a freshman at U of I. Jennifer Knapp, Lead Organizer of the Campaign, came to speak to my Speech Communications class. Everything Jen described sounded wonderful: Barb and Lester's vision, the Campaign's policy goals and the self-advocacy they promoted. I contacted Jen after the presentation and asked how I could help.

What started as a college internship became a life-changing experience. Every time I left the Pritchards' house, I thought about how lucky I was to have these people in my life. Jen was always willing to answer my questions and help with my projects. She has a contagious energy and is a natural leader. The skills she taught me, from very basic presentation techniques and writing tips, to more important life lessons about patience and kindness, have informed so many of my professional and personal experiences over the last several years.

Barbara Pritchard has had a similar impact on my life. Barb was like a second mom to me at school. I never left the Pritchard house hungry, and I usually didn't leave without a little treat. Barb's passion for what she does, her unconditional kindness, and her intense desire to help people are unparalleled. I was constantly inspired by her devotion to the people and projects that she loved.

And Barb loved no one and nothing more than her husband, Lester. I can say without any doubt that no one will ever teach me more about life, love, and strength than Lester Pritchard. He was not only a brilliant man with an incredible ability to make his vision a reality, he was a selfless and compassionate leader. He treated every person with fairness and respect, he faced every battle with unwavering optimism, and he never, ever passed up an opportunity to improve someone's life. He was the epitome of courage and determination. I am so lucky to have known Lester, to have learned from him, and to have loved him. His warmth touched so many lives, and his legacy will continue to do so. I am sad to see the Campaign end, but I count myself lucky to have been a part of it. To all the people I met and worked with, my deepest thanks.

Katie Dunne