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## Community message about the passing of Sharon Barker

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Kimberly Sawtelle <kimberly.sawtelle@maine.edu>

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## Community message about the passing of Sharon Barker

1 message

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**Office of Human Resources** <hr-um@maine.edu>  
Reply-To: Office of Human Resources <hr-um@maine.edu>  
To: UM-EMPLOYEES@lists.maine.edu

Wed, Nov 29, 2023 at 2:03 PM

Sharon Barker, a long-time University of Maine employee and tireless advocate for Maine women and girls, passed away unexpectedly on Saturday, Nov. 20.

Barker became the first director of the UMaine Women's Resource Center, now called the Intersectional Feminist Resource Center, in 1991. In that role, which she held until her retirement in 2014, Barker mentored countless students, collaborated with faculty and staff and served as a liaison with women's organizations in the community. Her leadership included developing and facilitating gender equity workshops for girls, offering professional development workshops in gender dynamics for teachers and training UMaine students to serve as role models and presenters at the annual Expanding Your Horizons program for middle school girls.

Barker co-founded the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center. She also secured a grant to create the Maine Girls Collaborative Project, which aims to increase girls' participation in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) through collaborative work and resource sharing among girl-serving organizations. Additionally, she served on numerous boards of directors and committees, including the Maine Jobs Council, the Penobscot Valley Branch of the American Association of University Women, the Maine Women's Fund, the Eastern Regional Commission for Women, the Good Samaritan Agency, the Bangor CUREs Project, the Bangor Rape Crisis Center, the Women's Business Development Corporation and the Komen Foundation.

Barker's work was recognized with several awards, including the 2004 Sarah Orne Jewett Award of the Maine Women's Fund, the 1999 Bangor and Maine Federation of Business and Professional Women's Woman of the Year Awards, the 1997 National Education Association's Mary Hatwood Futrell Award, the 1997 Mabel Sine Wadsworth Women's Health Achievement Award and the 1995 Steve Gould Award from UMaine. She also was inducted into the Maine Women's Hall of Fame in 2009.

Barker is the namesake for the Barker Student Activism Award, which honors UMaine students who seek to implement positive change in their communities by fostering equity and social justice. The award is now managed by the Division of Student Life, which houses the center that Barker directed.

"Sharon Barker's commitment to equity for women was exemplified in every aspect of her work and has left a lasting impact on the many organizations with which she worked," says Emily Haddad, dean of the UMaine College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Barker's obituary is available [online](#).

UMaine students, faculty or staff in need of support can contact the Counseling Center, 207.581.1392, the university's Employee Assistance Program, 877.622.4327, or the Dean of Students Office, 207.581.1406.