

Meet **Camille Russell** from Chanute, Kansas KABC board member since December 2024



As a lifelong advocate for fellow humans, it is a pleasure to serve on the board of a trusted advocacy organization like Kansas Advocates for Better Care. I began advocating as a 4-year-old in the 1960's in nursing homes where my grandmother volunteered as activity coordinator. As they led arts and crafts, I'd often wander out to visit other residents who would sometimes send, this genuine, fun loving, tenacious child to "plead their cases." I suspect my grandmother did work behind the scenes, but I thought I was helping and it did build my communications skills and confidence. Wishes

residents had me take to nurses or administrators often were supported. Then and now, I adhere to a core belief that "All people have the right to live, love, work, play, and pursue their own life aspirations", and am a relentless supporter of person-centered practices, at all ages and in all places. I value being credentialed as a person-centered thinking trainer with The Learning Community for Person Centered Practices and have been an Ambassador for Charting the LifeCourse.

Among my roles as a public servant, I had the honor to work under two Kansas Attorneys General as director of the Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Unit. Also, as a Program Integrity and Compliance Specialist with Kansas Department for Aging and Disability for Home and Community Based Services and working to monitor transitions from institutions to live in their own homes. My favorite work was that of a regional long term care ombudsman visiting nursing homes in a 17-county region of Kansas. Getting paid to do what I did as a child, with written resident rights as regulation to help with the ask. (Though I will say it was easier to get the administration to act back in the 60's ...they were eager to know what a resident wanted and make that happen.)

After 6 years in the field, I was appointed to, and retired from, state service stationed in Topeka in the role of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. In that role working to resolve problems related to the health, safety, welfare and rights of individuals who live in long term care facilities, including promoting policies and consumer protections to improve long-term care services and support at the facility, local, state, and national level. In ALL those work roles, and additionally as a family caregiver, I was able to coordinate with and utilize the resources Kansas Advocates for Better Care provides across the state. KABC was a trusted, respected and reliable advocacy organization and has been a champion of person-centered practices for over 50 years. (Almost as long as me. Smiles!) I am happy to be able to be part of and continue to contribute to a good organization. Much work to do ... I am confident Kansas can do.