

## Sister Jean F. Mouch, 66, physician

January 15, 2012 | By Sally A. Downey, Inquirer Staff Writer

Sister Jean F. Mouch, 66, a physician and public health consultant who ministered in Africa and in Camden, died of cancer, Sunday, Jan. 1, at Holy Redeemer Hospice in Meadowbrook.

Sister Jean chaired the Medical Mission Sisters' Office of Community Health Evaluation, Planning and Research in Camden, where she had lived since 1997.

She consulted on health-assessment and improvement programs with Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center, the Department of Community Health Improvements, Project H.O.P.E. (Homeless Outreach Program Enrichment), and Health Advocates for Youth.

She was a coordinator for the Camden County Cancer Coalition and was a member of Camden City Futures, which recently completed the first community health needs assessment of Camden since 1995.

Sister Jean was a founding board member and former chair of CamConnect. The nonprofit was established in the late 1990s to provide data and analysis assessments and technical assistance to Camden organizations.

"She was an integral part in shaping what CamConnect has strived to achieve, stressing the importance of using facts to drive decision-making and to highlight the good as well as the bad in Camden," said Josh Wheeling, CamConnect's program manager.

Jeffrey Brenner, executive director of Camden Coalition of Health Care Providers, served on the CamConnect board and knew Sister Jean for 12 years.

"She refused to be ground down by bureaucracy and poverty in Camden," Brenner said. "For her, there were always infinite options. There was always a solution, no matter how difficult the problem."

Sister Jean's dream was to use data to better manage health care in Camden, concluding in one instance that outpatient clinics should replace costlier hospital emergency rooms.

"She was a go-to person - you knew that she was always good for support," said the Rev. Jeff Putthoff, executive director of Hopeworks 'N Camden, which trains youth in software programming and website design.

In 2003, Sister Jean received a woman of outstanding achievement award from the Girl Scouts of Camden County.



In an interview in 2004 for a Medical Mission Sisters publication, Sister Jean said: "I learn so much about communities that are struggling for their livelihoods, and continue to strive for dignity and justice. I feel very much a kindred spirit with everyone I work with. We're doing this together."

A native of Cincinnati, Sister Jean earned a bachelor's degree from Trinity College in Washington.

After entering the convent of the Medical Mission Sisters in Philadelphia in 1964, she earned a medical degree from the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York and completed a residency in family medicine at St. Louis University Hospital.

In 1976, she began a 15-year ministry in Africa, where she was a physician on the staff at Holy Family Hospital in Berekum, Ghana, and then was district medical officer of health for the Berekum-Jaman area in Ghana. She was also on the staff of Attat Hospital in Ethiopia for 18 months.

In rural Africa, she found that doctors had far fewer resources than they had in Camden. She told Brenner about operating on patients by flashlight.

Sister Jean took a leave from her work in Africa to earn a master's degree in maternal and child health from the University of London in 1981.

After returning to the United States, she earned a master's degree in public health from the Robert Wood Johnson School of Medicine in New Brunswick in 1994.

Sister Jean was an avid community gardener. Diagnosed with breast cancer 14 years ago, she aggressively pursued treatment.

"She loved life and wanted to keep active as long as possible," a longtime friend, Monica McGinley, said. She achieved her goal, and worked until mid-December.

Sister Jean is survived by three sisters and a brother.

A Funeral Mass was said Friday, Jan. 6, at the Chapel of the Medical Mission Sisters, 8400 Pine Rd., Philadelphia. Burial was in Medical Mission Sisters Cemetery.