

Burlington County Times

Late arts council member left an important mark on arts in NJ

By Elizabeth Mattson

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I met Lawrence Carlbon in 2009, when I joined the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and at that point he had already served on the board for nine years. He was warm, welcoming and knowledgeable.

The council is extremely fortunate to count him among its longest-standing and most dedicated members.

Appointed to the council by Gov. Christine Whitman in 2000, Carlbon served for 17 years — and under seven governors — working on behalf of New Jersey's arts organizations, artists and communities with professionalism and passion.

Over the years, he gave his time and energy generously, even when it wasn't easy. He was reliably attentive yet understated, opinionated yet open-minded, and always willing to show up and make a difference.

The projects and programs he had a hand in are too numerous to list. A few things come to mind, however, that I think he was especially proud of:

When Larry and his wife, Barbara, moved to Burlington County, Larry quickly assumed the role of catalyst for the revitalization of Burlington City. He skillfully aligned himself with local government and businesses, and helped broker deals that placed the arts literally in the center of the city.

Thanks to Larry's leadership, Burlington became home to the official headquarters of New Jersey's largest arts advocacy organization, and important state arts council partner, the ArtPride New Jersey Foundation.

Establishing the ArtPride headquarters as a presence in Burlington City not only helps the city, but strengthens ArtPride's ability to develop and deliver its flagship programs — among them Discover Jersey Arts, managed in close partnership with the council.

Larry served as chairman of the Discover Jersey Arts Advisory Committee for 13 years, shaping and representing the council's interests in statewide arts marketing and audience development. As arts participation habits and the media continued to change, Larry was a constant guiding voice of reason, keeping the project flexible and on mission.

He was also a key member of the team that drives the council's Emmy Award-winning television show "State of the Arts." His commitment to the show was unfailing, traveling to far corners of the state every other month to participate in hours-long creative meetings, oftentimes with Barbara by his side.

Larry Carlbon, who died on April 1 at age 88, without a doubt, left an important mark on this council, on the arts community and on New Jersey. He was one of the most active, hands-on, and impactful members this Council has ever seen. He was also a friend, and we'll all miss him dearly.