NH-ME LEND Program Director Betsy Humphreys to Retire

Her career in the field of developmental disabilities spanned more than 40 years

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This summer, after a career spanning over 40 years, Betsy Humphreys will be retiring from the Institute on Disability (IOD) and the New Hampshire-Maine Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Program (NH-ME LEND) (https://iod.unh.edu/nh-me-lend) program, leaving behind a legacy of transformative work in the field of developmental disabilities.

Humphreys is the departing director of the NH-ME LEND program and a research assistant professor of early childhood special education in the UNH department of education.

"Dedicating yourself to something you care about takes time, courage, and determination," Humphreys says.

Throughout her career, Humphreys took the time to listen, had the courage to continue learning, and was determined to effect change. She shared that, as a child, reading about individuals like Karen Killilea and Helen Keller sparked a deep curiosity to understand and learn more about the lived experiences of people with disabilities.

After completing her master's degree in early childhood special education at UNH, Humphreys immersed herself in the field for over a decade, gaining invaluable experience. Her passion and dedication led her back to UNH, where she taught and earned her doctorate in early childhood intervention and literacy. Eventually, in 2010, she joined the IOD as the director of the NH-ME LEND program, where she has continued to educate and change lives.

"The IOD had a significant influence on the development of my professional values and my professional community, and I knew I wanted to work in the UCEDD network. It has been an honor and a privilege to be part of the IOD and the larger UCEDD and LEND networks," Humphreys says. "The work is demanding on many different levels, but I would not have had it any other way. Thank you to the IOD for all you do and for all I have learned from being part of this great organization!"
The NH-ME LEND program prepares leaders in maternal and child health (MCH). Its mission is to enhance the lives of children with neurodevelopmental disabilities and their families, with a particular focus on those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The program strives to increase the number of leaders in the MCH workforce, enhance their leadership capabilities and address regional health disparities through interdisciplinary training of the highest quality.

“Today, there are leaders and policymakers across New Hampshire who have been directly trained and mentored by Betsy through the NH-ME LEND program. Our communities and disability services are stronger through the interdisciplinary practices that Betsy and LEND teach,” says Kelly Nye Lengerman, director of the UNH Institute on Disability.

Humphreys’ expertise and influence extend beyond the classroom, as she served on numerous committees and executive teams. She also contributed to the academic community as an editorial board member for the Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education and a peer reviewer for several early childhood-focused journals, further solidifying her status as a leader in her field.

“Betsy has not only served as a highly effective leader at UNH but also has contributed to the scholarship on leadership and as a member of the Steering Committee for the Association of University Centers on Disability National Training Director’s Council,” says Leslie Couse, executive director of engagement and faculty development at UNH.

Humphreys is leaving the NH-ME LEND program in good hands in incoming director Sarah Smith (https://iod.unh.edu/blog/2024/04/dr-sarah-smith-announced-new-director-nh-me-leadership-education-neurodevelopmental-disabilities-nh). Smith has over 15 years of experience as a pediatric occupational therapist focusing on children with autism and their families and a decade of experience in academia as a professor and researcher.

As for what Humphreys is most looking forward to upon retirement?

“That’s easy – more time with my husband and grandchildren, more travel, more singing and generally slowing down the pace a bit.”

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