

Last year Houselink and other agencies finished a report entitled 40 is too young to die, about the premature death of many of our dear community members – I think we all agree in this room – that so is 72 years of age - for Peggy – that was also just too young to die.

I did not get a chance to work that long with Peggy – but working in housing for 20 years, our path's intercepted numerous times and when they did, I had such great respect for what she said and how she said it. I have to admit, filling the shoes of someone like Peggy, who's leadership I admired so greatly was humbling and an incredible honour.

When I joined Houselink in 2010, the resounding message I received from members, the board and staff was a solid - stay the course. Become familiar with the culture of Houselink, nurture and sustain it's values.

Since then, it is what I have strived to accomplish.

It is difficult to separate Peggy's values from those of the organization. I want to highlight 3 values that are so imbedded in to culture here, we either happily take them for granted – or sometimes fret that we are not doing enough.

Being Member driven

As a leader Peggy knew the dynamics of power and how power is used and misused in our society. She knew folks coming into Houselink had much of their power stripped away through abuse, poverty, disability and homelessness. So much of the work over the years has been to create the space for members to regain their power.

We do not shy away from exhorting a strong culture of human rights. We are one of the few organizations where all the members who use our services, vote in their board of directors. The history of Houselink, the reports we've launched together with our members, the human rights challenges that the Homecoming Coalition has taken on against Nimbyism which Peggy launched, is all about the power of our collective voice, be it at a board table, or in a political strategy.

Community

Peggy also instinctively knew that it's next to impossible to separate our environment we live in from mental health recovery. Nurturing and caring communities is what allows us to be fully human with each other - whether you are a staff person or a member. Peggy often said – *food is really important to us here at Houselink*. It is interwoven into all of our gatherings, it facilitates conversations and community. In addition, our community kitchen staff are second to none in filling our bellies with delicious and healthy food.

Anti poverty

Lastly, Peggy appreciated how poverty so limits our opportunity and sense of dignity. Under her leadership, Houselink used as much of its budget to create job opportunities, nurture social purpose enterprises, ensure equity hiring policies for people with lived experience, and promote

an inclusive work environment. The understanding of how work is crucial to recovery is only now becoming a widely understood.

So as we are here to say good-bye to an amazing woman, we also celebrate a legacy that is not just about Peggy, it's about all of us in this room. Peggy's legacy is a shared legacy which is how she always saw it. We own it. It lives as much in our hearts, as in our mission.

And we will carry it on.