



Ms. Eileen Mary Paul

March 15, 1934 - September 6, 2025

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Eileen Paul, 91, a tireless advocate for women and the deaf community, died on September 6, 2025 after a lengthy stay at Ascension Living Carroll Manor in Washington, DC. She was a lifelong resident of the District of Columbia. Eileen founded or co-founded three nonprofit organizations. In 1971, Eileen met Barbara “Kanny” Kannappell, a deaf woman who was the first deaf person to receive a doctorate in sociolinguistics from Georgetown University. Eileen and Kanny fell in love. Eileen began to learn sign language at Gallaudet University, but soon found that what she was being taught was not the language and slang that she saw in the deaf community (American Sign Language). In 1972, Eileen and Ann Wilson, the African-American mother of a deaf son, challenged the instructor of the sign language class about their observations of deaf language. Eileen, Ann, and Kanny founded Deafpride, a nonprofit organization that advocated for the Deaf community and for the recognition of American Sign Language (ASL) as the official language for deaf people. Among the services and programs Deafpride offered were ASL classes, community organizing, interpreting services, and accessibility training for health care providers just to mention a few. Eileen developed communication workshops focused on bringing together deaf individuals and hearing parents of deaf children and allies of the deaf community and African American and white individuals.

Eileen also co-founded the Southeast Women’s Employment Coalition which

strived to increase well-paying employment opportunities for women. In 1983, she founded the Women's Technical Assistance Project. It brought together diverse women from the South and Southwest who were leaders of organizations in underserved communities. The project served a total of 60 organizations and received funding from major foundations including the Ford Foundation and the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation.

From 1998-2003, Eileen worked for the McAuley Institute as co-director of housing and community and director of technical assistance. In that capacity, she organized workshops and training opportunities for women who led housing and community development organizations throughout the U.S. After her long career in nonprofit organizations, Eileen started her own consultancy, ResourceWomen. She advised organizations on fundraising, wrote grant proposals, and advised organizations on strategies for improving their capacities. She published a guide on obtaining grant funding from religious organizations.

Eileen was fluent in American Sign Language and Spanish. Her education included a B.A. summa cum laude from Trinity Washington University, and three master's degrees—two from Catholic University and one from Fielding Graduate University.

She was predeceased by her partner Barbara Kannapell, who died in 2021. They were married for 50 years and fought for the respect, autonomy, and rights of deaf people of all races, genders, and sexual orientations.

Eileen used her considerable skills and energy to better the lives of many. She often worked to promote others rather than to take credit for her own accomplishments. She will be very dearly missed by friends and colleagues.

Funeral Service

A Celebration of Life is being planned for February 14, 2026. For additional information, please email mimib4978@gmail.com