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LINDA SCHEID 1942-2011

Legislator wanted to 'reach out'

● Admired on both sides of aisle, DFLer **Linda Scheid** focused on getting job done.



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State Sen. Linda Scheid said recently that she never intended to “march to my own beat.” All she wanted, she said, “was to reach out.”

Scheid, 68, who lost her six-year battle with ovarian cancer on Wednesday, was an advocate for vulnerable adults, read to children nestled in her lap at Brooklyn Park rec centers and, last month, helped cut through partisan gridlock to help pass the Surly Beer bill she authored.

“For the most part, what I did was rewarding, certainly more rewarding than not,” Scheid, DFL-Brooklyn Park, said this month from her home, where she was in hospice care.

“I’d like to see the [legislative] process improve, my goodness, yes. But when I think of some of the things we

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accomplished the last 30 years, all I can say is 'wow.'"

U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, who called Scheid "a mentor," recalled how she helped lead Klobuchar's first campaign for Hennepin County attorney.

"She clearly has this spiritual way of looking at things," Klobuchar said from Washington, D.C.

"She came into politics when very few women held office, represented an area with all kinds of people in it and was able to reach everyone, regardless of politics."

Scheid avoided the glare of the limelight, specializing in complex financial regulation and consumer protection law.

When word of Scheid entering hospice care was released this month, legislators and staff members at the Capitol were thunderstruck. Many immediately posted to her CaringBridge website, men and women, DFLers and Republicans alike.

Scheid's legislative career began in 1976 when she was elected to the Minnesota House, representing Brooklyn Center; she moved on to the Senate 10 years later, most recently being re-elected in 2010.

Follow her lead

Sen. Terri Bonoff, DFL-Minnetonka, wrote that after her election to the Senate, she was told by then-Rep. Ron Abrams: "Follow Linda Scheid's lead. She is very smart and knows what she is doing."

In 2005, Scheid was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, she

and had been undergoing chemotherapy treatments on and off since. Early last month, her staff said her treatment had become ineffective and, in consultation with her doctors and family, she decided to stop it.

Scheid received her bachelor's degree at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She later got a law degree from the William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul.

She served in the Peace Corps, teaching English in Ethiopia. In a response to a candidate questionnaire in 2006, Scheid wrote: "As a Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia in the '60s I felt called to public service. My values continue to be family and community."

Said her son, Scott Scheid, of Brooklyn Park: "My mother spent most of her life trying to make people's lives better."

"She was involved in just about every commission and committee for the city and education-wise for Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center." Even in death, Scheid hopes to improve people's lives by donating her body to the University of Minnesota's medical school.

She truly didn't understand how many lives she touched in her lifetime, her son said. But after he created a CaringBridge site and Facebook page for his mother, "so many people came out of the woodwork to wish her well and thank her for her years of service," he said. Her family plans to celebrate Scheid's life with a champagne brunch that will be open to the public.

Scheid's fight against what she called the "uncertainties of cancer" began in 1999, when

doctors removed a growth from one of her kidneys. She went public with her ovarian cancer diagnosis in 2007 in the midst of a debate over a health-care bill that would have set limits on some treatment options.

"I'm going to be personal about it," she testified. "To be really candid with you, I don't know if I have a few years to wait until you get the health-care costs contained."

"I don't mean to be overly dramatic about it," she went on. "I have no timeline on my health issues, but I do have recurring ovarian cancer. It's not curable. It means I'll be receiving chemotherapy therapy now until forever — 15 or 20 years sounds good to me."

"I'm sorry I'm taking it personally because I'm kind of in that position, not of my own choosing, but I think I'm probably speaking for a lot of other people out there."

Luci Botzek, Sherburne County's deputy administrator, called Scheid "a class act. She was always compassionate, friendly, welcoming, civil, kind of the Grand Dame of the Senate and the House, just a very special lady."

In the days following her decision to enter hospice, Scheid was asked what she had accomplished in more than 30 years of public service.

"Everything and nothing," responded the former substitute teacher. "But, golly, it's been an incredible run."

She's survived by another son, Kristofer Scheid of St. Paul; and her sister, Becky Longabaugh of Brooklyn Park.

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