

# Terry Illes, PhD

by Linda P. Smith

**IN 1994, WHEN I READ** "Promising Practice for Teaching Students with ADHD," an article submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, I knew I needed to contact its author—Terry Illes, PhD, of Sandy, Utah. As a Utah resident myself, an educator, the mother of a child with ADHD, and a CHADD volunteer, I was interested in helping families and educators who were struggling with issues surrounding ADHD. Terry appeared to have the same mission.

That was the beginning of a long ADHD-centered relationship. Terry taught me about all things ADHD. We worked together on many local and national projects, such as the Intermountain Healthcare Care Process Model for the Management of ADHD and CHADD's Parent to Parent: Family Training on ADHD. Terry understood the ADHD experience because he lived it. This enhanced his qualifications as a highly respected school psychologist and made him a leading parenting expert.

As I attended his standing-room-only funeral, I was reminded that he had lived as a positive role model for everything he had taught me. The following quotations from a few of his friends, professional colleagues, and students illustrate his tireless dedication to the ADHD community:

- Once in a career, if you are lucky, one gets to work with one as talented and dedicated as Terry Illes. As a pediatrician I greatly valued the opportunity to have Terry as a ready resource whenever I needed help getting evaluations, resources and help for my patients in the school system. Over the past twenty years we often worked together with students in his school that were my patients. It was the "perfect dream" situation. We collaborated on several projects. He was caring, passionate, smart and practical. Oh, how we will miss him.

**Jeff Schmidt, MD, Past President, Utah Chapter  
American Academy of Pediatrics**

- Terry Illes was a man with a heart who cared deeply about all children. He worked tirelessly to help parents, youth, school psychologists, and educators learn about ADHD. His goal was to help children with this disorder be more resilient and experience success.

**Fulvia Franco, PhD, Coordinator, Jordan Family Education Center**

- One of our sons, Harry, was literally flunking out of school. He hated going to school. Terry's parenting classes taught us how to parent a child with ADHD and how not to try to make a child with ADHD conform to "regular parenting methods." It rescued us from so much frustration!

**Mark and Lisa VanLeeuwen, Parents, Salt Lake City**

- If it weren't for Dr. Illes, I would probably still be sitting in Ollie's anger management class.

**Christian, Age 14, Student, Jordan School District**

- People who have known Terry know that they are better people for having known him. He taught everyone at our school to "Be kind, smile and have fun on the journey." He wanted to make sure that every child

at our school had the opportunity to be the best person he could be.

**Steve Giles, Principal, Riverton Elementary School**

- Terry's loss will be felt deeply not only in our Parent to Parent program, but throughout CHADD. Terry donated enormous amounts of time and talent to CHADD as one of our Parent to Parent trainers for our teacher certification program. Terry's easy wit, laid-back style, and commitment to getting our information right will be deeply missed. He was an exceptional trainer, making even the most difficult topics easy to understand and infused with stories of his own ADHD, his wife and children, and his students.

**Ruth Hughes, Chief Program Officer, CHADD**

- Terry Illes was my friend and mentor, but he felt like a brother to me. I have learned so many things from him. He is a light for me and many, many, many families! He taught me resiliency and how to understand my son with ADHD.


**Beth Kaplanek, Cofounder, Parent to Parent**

- As tears flow, none of us have the words to truly express what Terry meant to everyone and the contributions he made to his field.

**Mary Durheim, Former CHADD President, Cofounder, Parent to Parent**

A frequent contributor to *Attention*, Terry's articles were particularly useful to parents and educators. He served on the magazine's editorial advisory board as well as on CHADD's board of directors. His presentations at CHADD conferences were always standing-room-only and the same was true for his last workshop as he was exiting this mortal stage of life. That workshop, in February 2010, was covered by an article in the *Salt Lake City Tribune* and this photograph. The reporter quoted Terry:

We're trying to teach parents and educators that even though children have a disability, they still have the right to feel good about themselves; they still have a right to feel confident. It's those feelings in the long term that determine whether the child is successful or not. This is damage control. We're trying to prevent the disorder from becoming a lifelong chronic millstone around the child's neck.

We offer our condolences to Terry's wife and children, and thank them for sharing him with the ADHD community for so many years. Everyone concerned about ADHD has lost a true champion. 

**Linda P. Smith** is a cofounder of Parent to Parent, a former member of CHADD's board of directors, and director of education for CHADD of Utah.



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