

Honoring a Lifetime of Humility, Compassion and Generosity

Cornelia “Cornie” Hayes Stevens, one of the Center’s earliest and dearest friends, died on July 15, 2024. Among the first founders of the Center for Ethics, Cornie recognized from its inception that the Center’s mission was vitally important, and she embraced the work with passion and steadfast commitment. Her dedication as a volunteer was legendary. She chaired the advisory council from 1991-2005 and often contributed up to 40 hours a week for fundraising and donor stewardship, as well as serving as wise counsel to Center leaders. In 1999, the Cornelia Hayes Stevens Chair, held by the Center for Ethics director, was named after Cornie to honor her dedication and generosity – an honor she did not seek and was reluctant to accept, which stands as testimony to her characteristic humility.



Cornie Stevens (right) poses for a picture with former Center director and inaugural Cornelia Hayes Stevens Chair, Dr. Susan Tolle (left).

Each year, Cornie participated in the OHSU Graduation Ceremony by presenting the revered Golden-Headed Cane Award, established by her father, to the winning medical student. The award honors a graduating medical student who best exemplifies the qualities that define a “true physician: integrity, humility, compassion, outstanding dedication and skill in the care of patients.” Although not a physician, Cornie consistently modeled these qualities and dedicated her life to serving others.

As a true philanthropist, Cornie volunteered to serve others in many roles outside of the Center for Ethics, including the Medical Research Foundation, the ARCS Foundation, and Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, among many others. Cornie believed that supporting her community was a basic value, stating “You should care for you fellow humans. It’s about treating people with respect.”

“Cornie was one of our most faithful, beloved, and humble champions,” said Susan Tolle, former director of the Center. “It’s impossible to sum up how much she contributed to the Center’s mission and growth in so many different ways, and we are immeasurably grateful to her.”

Throughout her life, Cornie exemplified humility, compassion, and generosity. The Center for Ethics is honored to have worked beside her, and to carry her legacy forward for decades to come.