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For Immediate Release

The International Childbirth Education Association Remembers Sheila Kitzinger

Raleigh North Carolina – The world’s foremost childbirth educator and birth activist, Sheila Kitzinger, died yesterday after a brief illness. She was 86.

Throughout her 50 year career, Sheila Kitzinger sought to empower women with every book she wrote, and every lecture and workshop. She was the embodiment of ICEA’s motto: “Freedom to make decisions based on knowledge of alternatives in family-centered maternity and newborn care.”

Early in her career, Kitzinger used her studies in anthropology and her commitment to birth to work toward a safe environment for birthing women. In 1958, she joined the advisory board of the National Childbirth Trust (Great Britain) and soon after, became a consultant for the International Childbirth Education Association. From her landmark book Giving Birth: The Parents’ Emotions in Childbirth (1971) to her soon to be published autobiography A Passion for Birth: My Life – Anthropology, Family and Feminism (2015), Kitzinger was a true advocate for women and an activist for physiologic birth.

Kitzinger felt that passionate and committed individuals could create social change. Her daughter, Celia said of her mother, “She never hesitated to speak truth to power.” Her books covered topics such as birth plans, waterbirth, risks/benefits of labor induction, side effects of anesthesia and analgesia, and the politics of birth. Sheila Kitzinger was ahead of her time, and for many, was the light house in the stormy sea of advocating for gentle birth practices.

“Sheila Kitzinger was a role model for midwives and childbirth educators. She was a true force of nature. Her perseverance, strength and wisdom will be an inspiration for us for many generations,” said Connie Livingston RN, BS, ICCE, president of the International Childbirth Education Association.

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