

Robert Perske, 88, Disability Advocate

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Date : September 18, 2016

Robert Perske Acclaimed disability advocate, author Robert Perske, author and internationally acclaimed advocate for people with developmental disabilities, died on Sunday, Aug. 14, at his home in Darien. He was 88.

A recipient of many awards, including The Arc's Lifetime Justice Advocacy Award and the only non-lawyer to ever receive the American Bar Association's Paul Hearne Award for Services to Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, Bob devoted most of his life to serving as the voice for those who have no voice, especially those he believed were wrongly convicted of crimes.

He began his career as an ordained Methodist minister, serving as chaplain at Kansas Neurological Institute,

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a state institution for boys and girls with intellectual disabilities. In the 1970s, he moved to Darien and began his writing career working for Random House.

— [This obituary](#) previously was published by the Topeka Capital-Journal. (The Hartford Courant previously published [this article](#) after his death.)

He authored 16 books (many illustrated by his wife, Martha) and countless articles, all calling for a fairer and richer social justice for persons with disabilities.

Leigh Ann Davis of The Arc called Bob a mentor for our movement and friend for our souls. In an article for the organization's InSight publication, she wrote:

It's not everyday that you meet someone who changes you, someone who inspires you to become more than you thought possible, and someone who ignites inside of you a passion to step away out of your comfort zone and help someone you barely even know.

He is survived by his wife, Martha; his son Richard Perske of Topeka Kansas; his daughter, Ann O Connell of Omaha, Nebraska; Martha's two sons, Marc Perske of Wilmington North Carolina, Lee Lemon of Gretna, Nebraska and their families. Perske has donated his body to the Yale School of Medicine.

In lieu of flowers, the family is requesting that memorial donations be made to Communitas, Box 358, Manchester, CT 06040.

— by the Family of Robert Perske