Dr. Paul Fitzgerald Interfaith Outreach Honoree Bio

Paul and his twin sister were late in life and joyous arrivals for their parents, May and Mort Fitzgerald, of Rockville Centre, Long Island, New York on July 9, 1938. Paul has always said it was a very special journey to be a twin and they were so very close. He graduated with a BA from Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts and along with the quality Jesuit education and the lifelong relationships he built there, he gained a desire to make medicine his career. He chose New York University Medical School in New York City for his degree and upon graduating, spent two more years in the city at St. Vincent's Hospital for his Internship and General Surgery residency. Then to fulfill his military obligation with the Vietnam War-era Berry Plan for physicians, he chose to enter the Air Force and was sent off to Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome, New York – having first mistakenly thought his assignment was to Rome, Italy! During his two years there as Captain Fitzgerald, he marveled that he never once entered an aircraft of any kind but spent all his time as a surgeon in the base hospital. After that, it was back to New York City once again for three years of Orthopedic Surgery Residency at the prestigious Hospital for Special Surgery of Cornell Medical Center.

Having never imagined this native New Yorker would ever leave the New York area, it was now time for him to choose a place to raise his growing family. He was drawn to Lynchburg by his close friend and fellow resident Terry Miller, M.D. and they became the founders of Piedmont Orthopedic Surgery in 1971, and the first to perform joint replacement surgery in Lynchburg. For 10 years while practicing, Paul also somehow found time to commute to the University of Virginia Medical School Department of Orthopedics as a Visiting Instructor! From then until he retired from active practice with five additional partners in 2008, he felt so very grateful for an exceptionally devoted, caring and talented staff and colleagues, both in his office and the hospitals. The practice merged with two others to form the Orthopedic Center of Central Virginia.

It is difficult to imagine with the busy medical practice Paul had for almost 40 years that he had time to contribute so much to his adopted community that he had come to love so much. From the beginning, he was committed to continuously improving healthcare in Central Virginia. Just two years after he arrived here, he started serving on the Board of the Lynchburg Academy of Medicine as Secretary/Treasurer and remained there for almost 20 years. He served as Chief of the Combined Medical Staffs of Lynchburg General and Va.
Baptist Hospitals. He recalls with pride the role he and other physicians played in the founding of Centra through the merger of Lynchburg General and Virginia Baptist hospitals in 1986. After serving on the Merger Committee, he subsequently served on the Centra Board of Directors for nine years, as well as the Board of the Johnson Health Center. A major contribution during this time was his initiative, with the help of George Dawson, to start a Medical Ethics Committee for Centra, which had been mandated for accreditation but was not a popular concept within the medical community at that time. With the invaluable participation of professional medical ethicist Dr. Michael Gillette, Paul chaired the committee and guided it for several years and it remains today. But his proudest and longest service was on the Centra Foundation Board, where he

encouraged and oversaw studies on many important community health issues and programs. When he retired from it in 2023, he was thanked for bringing “his passion, intellect, insight and experience to the Foundation Board for the last 40 years. You truly helped to move the Foundation forward as one of our Founding members.”

Paul always said one of the most satisfying experiences of his medical career was his volunteer work at the Free Clinic of Central Virginia, both while he was still in active practice and after he retired, fourteen years in all. Freed from the economic imperative of squeezing large numbers of patients into office hours, he could spend extended quality time with patients who had rarely received that kind of care and couldn’t afford it. And their appreciation for the compassionate care they received there from him and the devoted staff was deeply gratifying. Paul received three Volunteering Excellence awards over those years for “his unselfish and steadfast service to patients and exemplary dedication to the Mission of the Free Clinic.” He retired from the Clinic in 2020.

In addition to his devotion to quality medical care and charity care in the community, Paul always had a deep interest in the quality of public education in Lynchburg, believing it vitally important for the prosperity of the city. He was excited to be invited to join the LCS School Board and served for six years. Immediately after that he was invited to join the LCS Education Foundation, where he stayed for 25 years as the longest serving member, providing for impactful programs for students that are beyond what public revenues provide. With three children having graduated from E.C. Glass, he was also honored to serve on the E.C. Glass Foundation to raise money for grants to teachers for special projects.

But the highlight of Paul’s contributions to public education was undoubtedly his time with Beacon of Hope. Laura Hamilton, its first and longtime Director, generously commented, “Without Paul Fitzgerald, there would be no Lynchburg Beacon of Hope.” As an outgrowth of Lynchburg’s Dialogue on Race and Racism, she noted that he and a small group of visionaries, including Rosel Schewel, worked tirelessly to launch, fund and mobilize support for a promise scholarship program called “Stay Close, Go Far,” the first in Virginia. Paul launched a mentoring program for Glass athletes, recruiting some friends to mentor and encourage students from underserved families to help them with college applications and visits and any barriers they might encounter. He served as a leader on Beacon’s Board of Directors for many years. His last contribution to education in his retirement years was to help set up and advise a Doctoral Program in Physical Therapy at the University of Lynchburg.

Paul had a big and caring heart in so many ways. He loved serving Meals on Wheels and helping his wife Libby cook and serve dinner to the men at the Gateway Men’s Shelter for several years, where he also served on the Advisory Board. He took the opportunity to work three months long stints in St. Jude Hospital in St. Lucia as a volunteer physician with Orthopedics Overseas, and three visits to a clinic in Roatan, Honduras. He helped build Habitat houses both locally and in many other locations with Tom Gerdy’s crew of “Crazies”. He coached Little League football when his son Paul was playing and was the team doctor for Paul’s Glass football team that won the state

championship in 1988. After most every victory the whole team gathered at the Fitzgerald home for a celebration. And for 40 years there were countless weekends spent at their Smith Mountain Lake condo with Dr. Fitz spending hours in the boat pulling untold numbers of kids up on skis!

All who know Paul Fitzgerald know he is deeply proud of his Irish heritage. His favorite saying is: “You can tell an Irishman but you can’t tell him much!” His love for Notre Dame and the Fighting Irish began in boyhood. Several decades of membership in the Irish American Orthopedic Society took him and Libby to Ireland 9 times and he cherished every one. Paul loved sports in his spare time, especially tennis, squash and golf, and he was a tough competitor, even in family tennis matches! In later years, Libby turned him into an enthusiastic bicyclist, and they are seen often on the bike trails downtown. After multiple trips abroad, their favorite travel became the unforgettable bike trips they did in New Zealand, South Africa, Provence, Tuscany, and Canada among others.

In addition to the countless patients over the years who have remarked on the time and kindness and compassionate care Dr. Fitzgerald gave them, without doubt, one of the most wonderful things about him that friends have always loved and marveled at is his ability to play most anything by ear on the piano! It is a talent he carries from childhood, inherited from his mother, and it has entertained and delighted so many gatherings. “Danny Boy” is his favorite and he can belt that out like a pro! A devoted member of Holy Cross Catholic Church, Paul served on Parish Council, the Building Committee, and as a Eucharistic Minister.

For all he has done for so many years in the community, for being a friend and mentor to so many, Paul has received numerous awards – the Mayor’s Award of Excellence, the Barney Award for outstanding service to the Lynchburg Academy of Medicine and the Lynchburg Community, the National Conference of Christians and Jews Brotherhood Citation, Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities Humanitarian Award, and Interfaith Outreach Seeds of Hope Honoree. But while deeply appreciating them all, what he has always valued most in his life is the love of his family, of his adoring wife and the children and grandchildren of whom he is so very proud.

Libby Fitzgerald Interfaith Outreach Honoree Bio

Libby Fitzgerald's background is in journalism and her early life lived in and around politics. During her growing up years in Washington, DC while her father was a member of Congress representing Buffalo and Niagara Falls in upstate New York, she participated frequently in functions that were a part of his political career, and in 1964 when he was nominated the Vice-Presidential candidate on the Republican ticket with Senator Barry Goldwater, she took a three month leave from her senior year at Boston College to travel the country and speak on behalf of the national ticket.

Though the ticket was resoundingly defeated, Libby gained a fascination for the media and the vital role it must play in our democracy. And so despite being a Russian major with the goal of becoming an interpreter at the United Nations in New York, upon graduation she instead took a job with Time Inc. in New York, working as a researcher on *Time* and *Life* magazines. After two years, she met and married, after only 3 dates, Dr. Paul Fitzgerald, and after a year on Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome, New York and returning to New York City for 3 more years while he completed his orthopedic surgery residency, they moved to Lynchburg in 1971. Now married for 59 years with 3 children and 6 grandchildren!

Very quickly, after she learned to understand the Southern accent, Libby grew to love her new home with its warm and friendly people. And very quickly and unexpectedly she was offered a job with WSET-TV, the local ABC affiliate, hosting a daily noontime talk show, followed by news reporting, producing and moderating numerous public affairs programs, documentaries and specials, including a tour of the Governor's Mansion in Richmond, and anchoring election night returns. And so began, with a newborn Lynchburg baby and 2 toddlers, a broadcast career that made her passionate about the work of keeping the community and citizens she loved well informed.

After twenty years, she moved to a job with WVTF, the NPR station based in Roanoke, creating news stories as the Lynchburg stringer and moderating a weekly, call-in public affairs program for the next 15 years. During legislative sessions, Libby would broadcast for the station from Richmond. In 1988, after 2 years of weekly commuting, she completed a Masters degree in Communications/Journalism at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. And in 2004, after 10 years of research, she published a biography/memoir of her father, *Bill Miller:Do You Know Me? A Daughter Remembers,* including his experience as an assistant prosecutor at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials after World War II, his role in the national politics of the 1950s and 60s and the fight for the first Civil Rights bills, and the family's experience of participating in a national campaign.

With their three children grown, she now had the time and felt the need to be connected and to be of service, hands on, to people and causes she had come to value and love. Delivering Meals on Wheels with her husband Paul was an extremely fulfilling endeavor when along with a much needed meal you could bring a few moments of warmth and company to often very lonely people. Being a CASA volunteer for several years she found incredibly rewarding, advocating for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the foster care system. Serving meals often at Daily Bread, when they used

to feed the visitors at tables so you could sit with them and get to know them was a real privilege and an insight into their struggles. Similarly, Paul and Libby cooked and brought to the Gateway Men's Shelter a full dinner a couple times a month that they shared with them, a chance again to learn of the serious challenges the men faced and to offer help in any way they could. Building Habitat houses for years with Tom Gerdy and his "Crazies," both in town and away, was a unique combination of great fun and the overwhelming joy of creating a new life for so many hardworking and deserving families who worked alongside the volunteers.

Libby helped create the MAAM project for Centra 23 years ago – Mammograms Annually a Must – to provide free screenings to uninsured and underinsured women for early detection and prevention of breast cancer, and the Annual Luncheon that they started to raise money for the effort is still going strong. And then there was volunteer time spent at the Free Clinic, when Libby registered new patients and came to understand what the Clinic, where her husband volunteered for 14 years, meant to so many folks who had difficulty finding and affording the quality medical care that so many take for granted. For the Miriam's House Annual Spring Luncheon, Libby captained a table for many years to bring together friends who shared her deep sympathy and desire to help women who were facing hard times and needed shelter for themselves and their children. And finally, for many years Libby has helped when she could with her church's food pantry at Holy Cross, where residents in the College Hill neighborhood come regularly for supplies.

Over the years, Libby has also enjoyed service on several local boards, like the YMCA where she served for 14 years. But the arts has always been a priority for her. She was invited to the Board of The Fine Arts Center soon after arriving in Lynchburg and years later, when it merged with The Academy of Music to become the Academy Center of the Arts in 2003, she served on the merged Board for eight years. Witnessing the gradual transformation and the spectacular theatre that emerged from decades of hard work and dedication by so many and to have played a small part in something that has such an enormous cultural and economic impact on Lynchburg was one of her biggest thrills. She volunteered there from the grand opening in 2017 until the present, and among other contributions, she launched a Friends of the Academy several years ago. Libby has also been an active member of the James River Arts Council and the Endstation Theatre Board.

One endeavor that Libby is especially proud of is a book that she and a small group, spearheaded by Tom Gerdy and Patty Worsham, put together in 2013, entitled "Insights from Inside." It is a powerful collection of letters of warning and advice from incarcerated individuals, reaching out to the younger generation to hopefully divert them from making bad decisions that could dramatically change their lives forever and hurt innocent people. E.C. Glass graduate and local football legend, Ronald B.B. Shavers, organized the collection of letters for the book during his time of incarceration. The group had the book published and then networked it to schools, youth groups and churches both locally and around the country to get it in the hands of as many young people as possible.

A rather unusual project Libby, with her partner Peggy Nolley, brought to the city 5 years ago is the CHANGE FOR CHANGE CARING METERS, ten lime green decommissioned parking meters placed throughout downtown and Boonsboro asking

people to donate their spare change for local community groups assisting those in need. Together with the generous contributions of the eight local businesses who signed on as Matching Partners, this initiative has, to date, given away a total of $40,000 to “the hidden gems” in the city – causes that are not well known or financed but that are doing truly wonderful and life-changing things for needy groups and people in the community.
Finally, the civic contribution that has brought Libby perhaps the greatest joy has been launching and managing the HILL CITY KEYS public piano project, now in its 13th year! Countless upright, spinet and baby grand pianos have been donated to her by local residents over those years and some local artists and the students at area colleges, high schools and middle schools have painted them into stunning works of art, making them all extremely proud of their civic contribution! Three pianos are placed permanently in indoor spaces like the General Hospital, the Cancer Center and the Community Access Network, but eight pianos are dispersed throughout downtown annually and they remain outdoors for 6 months under cover, played by young and old, who delight passersby at all times of day and night with “the sound of music.” The joy the pianos have brought to the city, from all the reports she has heard, has made them so dear to Libby’s heart.
For her contributions to the community over the years, Libby has received the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities Humanitarian Award, the Mayor’s Award of Excellence, the Free Clinic’s Libba Hughes Award for long term volunteer service, and the Interfaith Outreach Seeds of Hope Honoree. While deeply appreciating them all, her greatest pride and joy is those three beautiful children and their spouses and her six wonderful grandchildren.