
SRV MATTERS

Professor Wolf Wolfensberger

At the 2024 Australian SRV Gathering, some participants asked, 'Who is Professor Wolfensberger?' This 'SRV Matters' introduces Wolf to readers.

For 50 years, people with intellectual disabilities, their families, and their allies have seen a huge change in how their place in society is valued and understood. How people are seen to be able to contribute and participate has changed too. People are generally no longer incarcerated in institutions, kept away from society, and so on. We now see and meet more and more people with disabilities who live good lives in ordinary communities. Wolf died on 27 February 2011 - he had spent his entire adult life as a major influence on achieving these changes.

Wolf's major, but not only, contributions are the reformulation of Normalisation (SRV's predecessor), the formulation of SRV, and creation of Citizen Advocacy.

A man of exceptional ability in future-telling, and in bringing together ideas from numerous, usually separate, fields of knowledge, he fought for people to have the good things of life. He was a change agent in the closing of institutions in Nebraska and then went onto to an appointment as a visiting scholar in Canada. Later, having risen to the rank of Professor at Syracuse University, from 1992 to his death in 2011, he was a research professor in the School of Education there. At the same time, he was the director of the Syracuse University Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership and Change Agency. His body of written works shows his intellectual gifts of analysis, theory building, and strategic

thinking (he held the U.S. Chess Federation rank of Chess Expert, one grade below National Master).

Wolf was committed to seeing people with disabilities and people from other devalued groups get the good things of life. He was a man who held very high standards and who expected the same from any and all of us he interacted with.

His commitment to other devalued groups saw his and his colleagues in Syracuse completely revamp a soup kitchen in their neighbourhood. He was instrumental in moving Unity Kitchen from a typical soup kitchen to a place of real hospitality. People are treated as guests and share a real meal, with linen, silverware and crockery dishes; Wolf and other servers would sit and eat with those they served. See these interesting and entertaining tributes to Wolf at:

https://www.viaa.org.au/uploads/1/4/2/4/14243071/srv_in_action_edition_2_may_2011.pdf



SRV Ideas: Origins
