

MEMORIES OF A REMARKABLE PARENT AND EDUCATOR

# CHRIS A. ZEIGLER DENDY

Compiled by Shari Gent, MS

**I**T IS WITH SADNESS that we share the passing of Chris A. Zeigler Dendy, a longtime CHADD volunteer and cofounder of CHADD's Teacher to Teacher training program, on July 8, 2023. Inducted into CHADD's Hall of Fame in 2006, she received CHADD's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014.

A passionate advocate, educator, school psychologist, and children's mental health professional, she was a popular author on ADHD who contributed many articles to CHADD's *Attention* magazine. Many members of the ADHD community learned from her presentations at CHADD's Annual International Conference on ADHD. She provided training on ADHD for both parents and professionals. At times, her beloved late husband, Robert Thomas "Tommy" Dendy, joined her in presenting.



Chris A. Ziegler Dendy  
1944–2023



Chris Dendy authored five highly respected books, including *Teenagers with ADD & ADHD* and *Teaching Teens with ADD, ADHD & Executive Function Deficits*, two videos, and the popular *ADHD Iceberg* poster. Her son Alex Zeigler was the inspiration for her work in this field, and together they coauthored *A Bird's-Eye View of Life with ADD and ADHD: Advice from Young Survivors*. With former CHADD CEO Ruth Hughes, she coauthored *Launching into Young Adulthood with ADHD... Ready or Not* and *Successfully Launching into Young Adulthood with ADHD: Firsthand Guidance for Parents and Educators Supporting Children with Neurodevelopmental Differences*.

A beloved mother, sister, and grandmother, an inspiring mentor, colleague, and friend, her loss leaves a huge hole in the hearts of her family and many friends. She will be missed, yet her legacy will live on through the tremendous impact she has had on so many lives.

In the voices of parents and professionals from across the country, we honor Chris.



Chris was a master communicator. She had a unique talent for combining her experience as a parent with knowledge of the classroom, state-of-the-art treatment information, and ADHD public policy. Chris was able to talk with any audience—clinicians, teachers, researchers, parents, policymakers, and the doubting public—and make a connection. She made scientific information clear to parents and family struggles real to researchers and policymakers.

Right up to her last illness, Chris continued to write and present. Over the years she has written many books and countless articles, and provided training for thousands of people throughout the United States and the world. She even made a series of videos on ADHD with her son, Alex. She was an extraordinary ambassador for all people with ADHD, and I have no doubt she both raised awareness and reduced the stigma of ADHD over her lifetime.

Chris has been one of my best friends for three decades. We shared our combined experiences of raising our children with ADHD and working as psychologists in the field. Hands down, our sons, Alex and Christopher, taught us so much more about growing up and living with ADHD, than any clinical information we had learned.

Over the years we began to present together and write together. I was privileged to be her coauthor with her last books. We knew we were in sync when we couldn't tell which one of us wrote which paragraph of the book. Sadly, her last book, *Successfully Launching into Young Adulthood with ADHD*, was published just after her death, I will miss Chris for years to come. The world of ADHD has lost a gentle giant.

—Ruth Hughes, PhD, psychologist and former CHADD CEO | Columbia, Maryland



Chris always made me and others feel like our voice mattered in the ADHD community. She created a summer symposium—Camp Dendy—for professionals and parents to share resources. She said many times that she created the “camp” to share her materials so that when she was gone, they would live on.

Chris, your legacy is unsurpassed in the ADHD field, and those who know you and love you will continue to share your wisdom and your archive of ADHD presentations and books. You are a legend and will be missed greatly.

—Beth McGraw, MEd, independent educational consultant, LaunchPad Consulting Group | Dallas, Texas



How did I meet Chris? Chris responded to an email from me after I messaged her when I came across her information. While reading her information I thought this describes my son. I was having such difficulty with his teachers and I needed guidance. I never dreamed she would respond. She answered all my emails and she was such a support for me. Over time it turned into a friendship. I couldn't believe when she called me and told me about her camp and that she was asking me to attend. Without hesitation, I said *yes yes yes!!!!* So thankful for the opportunity to have known her and learn from her, for the network and strong knowledgeable women I met. She was a lifeline for me. Her heart was pure kindness.

—Wendy Consoli, parent | Wayne, Nebraska



I have admired Chris's work since the early days. When I was working as a diagnostician and teacher trainer with the California Department of Education, I leaned heavily on her books for recommendations. The publication of *Teenagers with ADD & ADHD* was a godsend for both me as a parent and for all the parents and teachers I worked with. There simply was nothing like it out there!

Chris always knew how to make people feel loved and supported. Although highly accomplished, she never put herself above others. I never dreamed that I would get to meet her, much less visit her home and get to know her family. Then, perhaps twenty years ago, I attended the CHADD conference in San Diego and experienced her presentation in person.

At the time, I was still half in denial that my own son, then about thirteen or fourteen, had ADHD. Her presentation left me with no doubts. She showed the video of her son Alex riding his bike off the end of a pier, the picture that is on the cover of *A Bird's Eye View*. My son, Alek, had done the same thing! I approached her during the book signings and we had a long talk. That was a turning point in my life as a parent and opened the door to a long friendship with Chris who served as my mentor, both personal and professional, for many years.

Chris's work and presence have given dignity to the lives of people with ADHD, including my own. She had the gift of being able to see the person beyond the label. Chris was an extraordinarily generous and loving person who truly radiated warmth and understanding to all around her.

—*Shari Gent, MS, educational therapist; former education specialist, California Department of Education | Fremont, California*



Chris had such an incredible influence in my life, and I will never stop loving her. I first made a connection with her when I was preparing to give a workshop on ADHD for parents at my daughter's high school. I reached out to her via email and asked her permission to use some of the information from her book on teens with ADHD. She immediately replied and told me to feel free to use anything I wanted. I was so impressed!

We began to contact each other occasionally, and I was so excited to meet her at the next CHADD conference. We continued to stay in touch over the years, through CHADD conferences and emails, and she invited me to join her and an amazing group of women at Camp Dendy.

Two things that blew me away were that she would occasionally reach out to me for advice and/or tips on working with early childhood students, and that in 2016, she and Shari nominated me for the CHADD Educator of the Year award. I think the two of them were even more excited than I was when I stepped up to receive it.

There aren't enough awards out there to acknowledge all that Chris has done and given to so many. She was a true shining light in this world and I feel so grateful to have known her. Her work will live on.

—*Alicia Solano, retired kindergarten teacher | Antioch, California*



People often ask, "Who was a huge influence in your life?" We often dig far back and think of teachers who influenced us as teenagers, or a coach who really turned us around. Rarely do we quickly think of someone that we've only known for four years. Not true for me!

Almost exactly four years ago, I opened up my Facebook page and saw a private message from Chris Dendy. She said she'd seen an adaptation I posted on a public ADHD page of an iceberg from *ADDitude* magazine. She said she really liked it and was interested in the work I was doing. I wondered, Was this a joke? Could this even be real? Chris Dendy was the original author of that iceberg, and as I looked on my shelf in my office, I saw one of her books right there. She was literally a pioneer in the ADHD community for over fifty years—why would she be reaching out to a fifty-year-old coach in Colorado?

I was skeptical, but I also have impulse control problems, so I gave her my number. She promptly called me and explained that each year she chooses people from around the country to come to her home in Alabama to participate in ADHD training at Camp Dendy. She asked if I would like to come and be part of Camp Dendy class of 2020, which turned into 2021 because of the pandemic. Off I went on a trip that changed the course of my life. That time in Alabama was spent surrounded by amazing women from all over the country. I was learning from people who literally wrote the books on ADHD, as well as the handbooks on 504 plans and dyslexia.

Chris was always looking for passion. She had a knack of finding people with passion and bringing them together to learn and support each other in a special community. She said that each class was unique and had its own vibe, and when I went back the following year as a guest, I saw how true that was. Only Chris could gather such a diverse group. She pulled together people who were passionate about ADHD in women, people who



were passionate about kids with incarcerated parents, people who were passionate about better serving kids with learning disabilities—just passionate! I soon learned that Chris had worn so many hats in her life herself, that she could spot that kind of passion a mile away. She had been a teacher, a counselor, a local and state mental health administrator, a lobbyist and CEO of a Florida mental health advocacy organization, a speaker, and an author—not to mention her work with CHADD. Her goal was to leave some of the things she learned along the way with people that she trusted would continue her work.

When I learned this amazing woman had passed away, I sat on the other end of the phone call absolutely stunned that she was gone. I couldn't process the loss. I started feeling sorry for myself that I didn't meet her sooner, that I couldn't see her again this summer. Chris Dendy wasn't the type of person to put up with that kind of thinking for long. I think she smacked some sense into me during the night. I could almost feel her stink eye. Today I asked myself, "Did we really lose her?" and the answer is no. She planted her seeds all over the place so that her love and work would live on. She raised strong kids that are carrying her legacy. She spread her knowledge far and wide with speaking engagements, videos, books, and Camp Dendy, which she always said fueled her soul. We are all moving forward with her work. She was a teacher till the end and taught us all she could about ADHD, and about strength in community. She truly changed the course of my life, even after the age of fifty.

—Cary Colleran, ADHD coach | Parker, Colorado



Chris was an amazing woman, a wonderful mentor, and a close friend to ADDA-SR for many years. Many of you may remember her from speaking at our annual conferences and numerous workshops. She was an expert on ADHD, a true international educator and bestselling author. Chris loved sharing her knowledge. Her books and presentations have helped thousands as she always made time for those needing her help. She deeply cared for and supported those coping with ADHD and executive function deficits. She will be greatly missed but never forgotten.

—Pam Esser, MEd, executive director, Attention Deficit Disorders Association Southern Region | Houston, Texas



Chris Dendy was a role model for me: teaching, coaching, and encouraging. I will miss her kindness, friendship, insight, and her vision to develop leaders.

—Kathy Kuhl, author and president, Learn Differently | Herndon, Virginia



Chris used to give me a nod—which meant to find her a quiet space. She always had a distraught parent in tow and wanted to sit quietly with them so they could talk.

Once, at a retreat, she asked me to introduce her to two parents who were overwhelmed with parenting and trying to process the vast amount of information. They were in tears. The plan was to make it seem organic. She would come up alongside of me for an introduction and then I would disappear.

—Jill Murphy, special education teacher advocate and technology consultant | Mercer Island, Washington

**CHADD is grateful for the Dendy family's generous request that donations in memory of Chris Dendy be made to CHADD.**

**If you wish to make a memorial donation, please go to <https://chadd.org/ChrisDendyDonations>.**