

Alumna Kathleen Cravero CNR SAS '76

A Life of Service

Dedicated to Global Impact

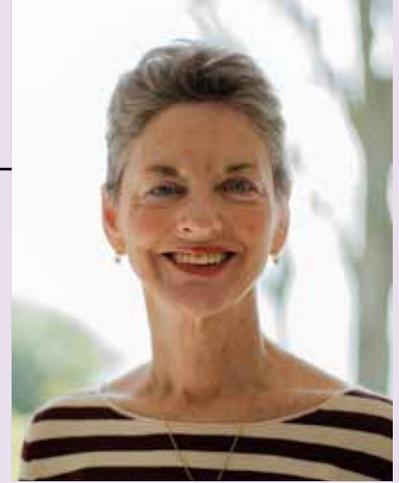


Photo provided by Kathleen Cravero

Throughout her remarkable career Dr. Kathleen Cravero CNR SAS '76 has been a voice for global change. For almost three decades, she helped shape international development and humanitarian policy through her work with the United Nations. Her further philanthropic leadership has been at the forefront of critical issues like human rights, gender-based violence and homelessness, focusing on the world's most disadvantaged groups.

Like many freshman college students, Cravero entered the College of New Rochelle (CNR) looking to make an impact on the world. Her initial idea was to become a special education teacher, a strong area of specialization at CNR. Little did she know a whole other career awaited her — one that would have an impact she never imagined.

Cravero's path was re-directed in a CNR sociology class during her sophomore year, through a strike of unexpected serendipity. Her professor, Dr. Margaret Bedard, represented an international children's rights organization at the United Nations. When she was suddenly unable to cover some important U.N. meetings, Bedard asked for a student volunteer to attend in her place. Cravero did not hesitate to raise her hand, which turned out to be a life-changing decision. "I walked into the General Assembly Hall and I had an epiphany. I knew I wanted to a part of what was going on there," said Cravero.

With Cravero's career revelation, she left CNR's teaching program and refocused her studies on languages, primarily French. As Cravero explained, there was no scaffolded program then to prepare for a career at the U.N., but she hoped having a background in language would give

her a competitive edge. With the help of Bedard, she was able to secure an internship in the U.N. Department of Social and Economic Affairs during her senior year. "That experience reaffirmed my path," said Cravero.

She went on to pursue her Ph.D. and began her professional U.N. work in 1979, as part of the International Year of the Child. That led to a posting with UNICEF, first in New York and then in Chad. After that, she never looked back. She went on to work for four U.N. organizations: UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization, and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. Advancing gender equity and ending violence against children were hallmarks of her work in each position she held.

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During her time at the U.N., Cravero recalls participating in many skill-building workshops, with several focusing on the then new concept of "servant leadership." For Cravero, it all sounded familiar. "I felt like most of the principles of servant leadership — of leading in a way that lifts up others — I had already learned at the College of New Rochelle," said Cravero. Watching the Ursuline Sisters at work and spending four years at an institution with service at its core fundamentally shaped her world view. The values she learned at CNR guided her through many difficult moments over the course of her U.N. career.

Several years of her career were

spent living and working among the people of Africa in Chad, Uganda, and Burundi. The significance of this work and the danger it entailed came to a head in 1999 in Burundi when her humanitarian convoy was ambushed and two of her colleagues were murdered. Though Cravero was forced to leave Burundi shortly after this traumatic incident, she remained steadfast in her commitment to international work and to peace-building in Africa and elsewhere.

Cravero eventually moved from her work with the U.N. to serve for ten years as President of Oak Foundation, a Switzerland-based, private grant-making foundation committed to issues of global, social, and environmental concern. Oak offered a unique opportunity to support non-governmental groups promoting the rights of women and children across the globe. It allowed her to see how private philanthropic funding could complement that of larger, multilateral institutions like the U.N.

Today, Cravero divides her time between Connecticut and Sweden. In addition to serving on several non-governmental boards and providing strategic advice on violence prevention, Cravero is a faculty member at the City University of New York School of Public Health and Health Policy (CUNY SPH). She teaches global health policy and politics as well as global health law, all of which became contentious subjects during the current global pandemic. Cravero also serves as a co-director at the Center for Immigrant, Refugee and Global Health. "My work at CUNY SPH allows me to reflect on almost four decades of work in international development and humanitarian assistance. My major focus now is to use that experience to help shape the next generation of global health leaders."