

# Professor, Harvard Medical School, Boston Children's Hospital, Champion of Infants and Families

**O**f Boston, MA, and Tunbridge, VT, died suddenly on Thursday, August 18, 2022. She was Professor of Psychology, Department of Psychiatry, Emerita, Harvard Medical School, Director, Neurobehavioral Infant and Child Studies, Boston Children's Hospital. She is survived by her husband and research colleague of 44 years, Frank H. Duffy, MD, Neurologist at Boston Children's Hospital and Associate Professor of Neurology, Harvard Medical School and son Christopher Hopkins Als Duffy of Camphill Village (an anthroposophical community for adults with developmental disabilities). Heidelise (Heidi) was born in Krumbach, Germany in 1940, the daughter of Elizabeth Broicher and Heinrich Maria Als, a barrister. Heidi grew up in war torn and post-World War II Germany. Her experiences during these formative years led her to question how people develop their emotions and inspired her to study how people are shaped by their environment.

Heidi received her BS (1963), Summa Cum Laude from the University of Würzburg, Germany and PhD in Developmental and Educational Psychology (1975) from the University of Pennsylvania.

During her graduate training, and married to her first husband, Heidi gave birth, in 1965, to her son, Christopher, a beautiful infant, whose neurological and developmental differences shaped Heidi's career by teaching her to understand that babies communicate and participate in their care if adults would only listen. This understanding led her to create a theoretical model, the Synactive Theory, which became the foundation for the Newborn Individualized Developmental Care and Assessment Program (NIDCAP) in 1982. During this year, Dr. Als established the National NIDCAP Training Center, affiliated with both Boston Children's Hospital and Brigham and Women's

Hospital, which provided a formal structure for NICU professionals to become certified in the use of NIDCAP.

In 2001, to coordinate and support NIDCAP training and training center development, Dr. Als founded the NIDCAP Federation International, Inc., a non-profit organization that ensures the quality of the NIDCAP model of developmental care education, training, and implementation and ultimately improves the future for infants in hospitals and their families around the world. Today there are 29 centers around the world training in individualized, developmental, family-centered, research-based NIDCAP care.

Over 49 years at Boston Children's Hospital, as Director of Neurobehavioral Infant and Child Studies, Heidi conducted many research projects on premature infants and how early experiences and care affect brain and emotional development from early infancy on to adolescence, publishing more than 150 research papers and giving countless presentations around the world. In addition, she disseminated an educational curriculum for hospital systems change for the education of professionals from many disciplines involved in the care of high-risk newborns in intensive medical care settings.

Over the last nine months, Dr. Als with her husband Dr. Duffy, transitioned to working remotely from their Vermont farm. During this time, she conducted remote training with professionals around the world and developed guidelines for online NIDCAP and APIB training and certification methods.

During this brief full-time Vermont life, Heidi found time to revive her garden and bird feeders, bake rhubarb pies for Frank and Duane Lawrence, their friend, and farm caretaker on Monarch Hill and reconnect with her farm life.

A visionary and a prominent scientist, Heidelise Als has left a legacy that will live on in those she mentored,



worked with, and befriended; and in the lives of premature and ill infants and their families, made better by her vision and tireless advocacy.

Heidi is also survived by and will be held forever in the hearts of family from around the globe including:

Her brother, Heinzpeter Als (Rosemarie); nieces, Barbara, Astrid, Maria (Björn); great-niece and nephews, Konrad, Carlotta, Mathilda, Malte; her sister, Urselmarie Als (René Haas); niece, Joanna Ashworth (Glen); great-nephew and niece, Jonathan, Emily; stepdaughter, Victoria Duffy-Hopper; granddaughter Galen Hopper; stepdaughter, Lisa Duffy; grandson, Brian Zagorski; great-grand daughter, River Fox; and stepson, Stephen; and her Farm family, Leigh Woods, Dakota Jensen and Duane Lawrence.

She will be forever missed by her Neurobehavioral Infant and Child Studies/National NIDCAP Training Center team, Gloria McAnulty PhD, Sandra Kosta, Samantha Butler PhD, and Jack Connolly all of Boston Children's Hospital (BCH) and Deborah Buehler, PhD her student who currently serves as the NFI President, and by her entire international NIDCAP community.

In lieu of flowers, Heidi requested that donations be made to Camphill Village Copake, NY, [www.camphillvillage.org](http://www.camphillvillage.org)

**Visiting Hours:** Relatives and friends are invited to attend the Calling Hour on Thursday, August 25th at 5:00-6:00PM at the Boardway and Cilley Funeral Home, 300 VT Route 110, CHELSEA, VT 05038, and the Funeral Service on Friday, August 26 at 2:00PM, Tunbridge Church, 273 VT Route 110, Tunbridge, VT 05077.