

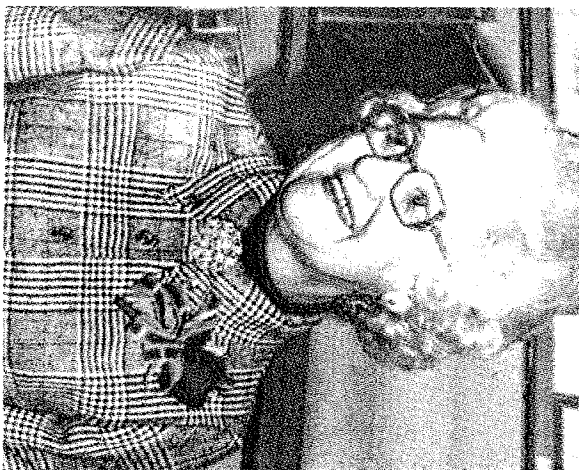
VERMONT

# Longtime director of Sara Holbrook Center dies

## Minnie Blondin directed the center for children for more than three decades



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Minnie Blondin, whose history with the Sara Holbrook Community Center in Burlington started in 1938, went on to become its executive director for more than three decades. COURTESY PHOTO

Minnie Blondin, who directed Burlington's Sara Holbrook Community Center for more than three decades, has died. She was 97.

The eldest of 14 children, Blondin grew up in Burlington and dedicated her life to serving the city's poor youth, both at the center and as a supervisor to Burlington's playgrounds.

"She was hardworking and generous and she loved kids," said her son, Art Blondin, 58, of Austin, Texas, Thursday. That's pretty much what they did at the Sara Holbrook Center was help kids. Give them a place to be. And they had different events for them and projects for them. Art Blondin said his mother died early Thursday at the Starr Farm Nursing home in Burlington.

Minnie Blondin began working at the Burlington community center in 1938, a year after it was founded on Cherry



Minnie Blondin, seen in this 1958 news clipping, began working at the Burlington community center in 1938, a year after it was founded by Sara Holbrook, a professor at the University of Vermont. COURTESY PHOTO

Street by Sara Holbrook, a professor at the University of Vermont. The center moved to College Street and in 1966 to its current location on North Avenue. Blondin served as executive director from 1943 to 1975.

Art Blondin said that even in the nursing home, his mother had visitors come up to her and say, "Hey, I was one of your girls at the center. And you know, you made a big difference in my life."

In 1944, Blondin opened a playground at Battery Park and went on to direct the activities at six other parks in Burlington through 1960.

"She made sure they were well staffed and they had all the necessary equipment there," Art Blondin said.

The activities at the park included tap dancing and puppet shows, he said.

Blondin's list of accolades runs long. In 1956, she won the Burlington Exchange Club's annual golden deeds award for her work with children in Burlington. In 1968, she became an honorary member of Vermont Alpha Chapter, Delta Kappa Gamma Society, an international honorary or-

ganization of women in education. In 1958, the Champlain Aerie 793 Fraternal Order of Eagles awarded Blondin, the mother of three boys, "Mother of the Year."

In 1976, the Sara Holbrook Center proclaimed June 20 "Minnie Blondin Day."

Asked during an interview years ago about her job at the Burlington center, Blondin said, "A child shouldn't come into a recreation center and be told, 'Today we're going to do this.' Recreation should be what a child wants to do."

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