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Took collegians beyond classroom

By Walter F. Naedele
Inquirer Staff Writer

Stevens E. Brooks, 68, of Chestnut Hill, executive director of the Philadelphia Center from 1973 to 2007, died of complications from pulmonary embolisms at Penn Presbyterian Medical Center on Thursday, June 3.

Founded in 1967 by the Great Lakes Colleges Association, the center offers college students a semester of what its website calls "experiential education."

"Students earn a full semester of academic credit from Hope College" in Holland, Mich., the website states, "for participating in the program's three central components: 32 hours per week of work at an internship, two courses, and independent city living."

At his 2007 retirement, Mr. Brooks told the Hope College website that in the 1960s the center had attracted students who wanted to be "agents of change" and "affect society in positive ways."

"What was radical then is now mainstream," he said.

Born in Plymouth Meeting, Mr. Brooks graduated from the William Penn Charter School in 1960 and earned a 1966 bachelor's degree at the University of Pennsylvania.

He was a teaching assistant at Penn Charter in the early 1960s and from 1966 through 1968 taught fifth-grade English and science, a school spokeswoman said.

Mr. Brooks began working for the Philadelphia Center in 1968, the center's website states, and was its director of education until 1973, when he became executive director.

While at the center, he earned a master's degree in higher education in 1979 at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vt.

During the 1970s, Mr. Brooks taught filmmaking in Saturday classes at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, said his wife, Krail. He also was on the adjunct faculty for classes in Germantown affiliated with the Antioch-Putney Graduate School of Education, she said.

Mr. Brooks was a founding member of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning; the forerunner of the National Society for Experiential Education, which named him one of its three pioneers of the year in 2005; and the Council of University Institutes for Urban Affairs, now the Urban Affairs Association at the University of Delaware, the



Stevens E. Brooks ran the Philadelphia Center, which offers college students a semester of hands-on work and city living.

Philadelphia Center's website states.

He was a consultant to the Learning From Experience Trust in London.

The center reported that Mr. Brooks edited the 1979 book *Enriching the Liberal Arts Through Experiential Education*.

Besides his wife, he is survived by a son, Reed.

A life celebration was set for 5 p.m. Tuesday, June 15, at Valley Green Inn, off Springfield Avenue in Chestnut Hill.