

In Memoriam

Twyla Bartel, DO, MBA

Ichi-go ichi-e. For this moment only.

Tracy L. Yarbrough, MD, PhD, MAEd – *American Board of Nuclear Medicine*

On June 15, 2026, Dr. Twyla Smith Bartel passed away, surrounded by her loved ones.

A single moment, one that came far too soon, quietly closed a lifetime of moments—moments of service to her faith, her family, her friends, and to a profession and community she loved deeply.

Ichi-go ichi-e is a Japanese expression often translated as "one time, one meeting"—a reminder that each encounter is singular and should be treasured because it will never occur in precisely the same way again. Whether we realized it or not, Twyla seemed to live this principle. She believed that each of us in the nuclear medicine community was, in some way, her friend. And she approached each encounter as an opportunity: to find common purpose, to recognize what another person brought to the table, and to bring people together toward a shared success.

In a world where so many of us spend our moments trying to prove that we are better than—smarter or more clever, kinder or more giving, faster or more skilled, louder or more accomplished—Twyla Bartel went about simply being better. She made the world a little more loving, more beautiful, more generous, and more inclusive, moment by moment and relationship by relationship. She did so not through boasting or self-promotion, but through a steady, often quiet—and, when the occasion demanded it, wonderfully bold—grace.

It is difficult for me to think of a personal triumph of Twyla's that did not somehow become an opportunity for someone else.

After years as an academic nuclear medicine physician, educator, and leader, Twyla made a decision which was somewhat unconventional at the time--to return to residency to train in diagnostic radiology. It was a decision that broadened her own skillset and opportunities, certainly, but its impact extended far beyond her. Her career, in this way and in so many others, demonstrated what was possible for those willing to take an unconventional path, and she spent the years that followed helping others find paths of their own.

In 2013, as co-founder of Global Advanced Imaging, PLLC, Twyla again turned opportunity outward. At a challenging time for the field, she worked to expand practice opportunities for qualified nuclear medicine physicians while helping bring nuclear medicine expertise to patients and communities where access was limited. She was an unapologetic champion for nuclear medicine as a profession and for nuclear medicine physicians as professionals. For countless colleagues, she was the person willing to make an introduction, open a door, offer advice, make a phone call, or simply say, "I know someone."

And Twyla knew everyone.

But more importantly, she made everyone feel worth knowing.

Her service to nuclear medicine reflected the same instinct. Having trained at the University of Iowa and subsequently serving in leadership roles across many of our field's professional organizations, Twyla devoted seemingly endless energy to education, certification, advocacy, and the future of the specialty. Her contributions to the American Board of Nuclear Medicine were part of a much larger lifetime commitment to ensuring that nuclear medicine remained strong, relevant, and welcoming to those who would carry it forward.

Those of us fortunate enough to know Twyla well also knew that her titles and accomplishments tell only a tiny fraction of her story. Twyla noticed people. She remembered them. She connected them. She saw potential in people that they sometimes had not yet recognized in themselves, and she made sure others knew about that potential. Her focus was rarely on what an opportunity might do for her, but on what might become possible—for a colleague, a trainee, a patient, a profession—if someone simply helped create the opening.

That may be among the most meaningful measures of a life: not simply what we accomplish during the moments we are given, but how many other lives become larger because we were there.

Twyla was not an ordinary nuclear medicine physician—if there is such a thing. She was an extraordinary advocate, educator, colleague, mentor, connector, and friend. She leaves behind a profession stronger for her service and a community filled with people whose careers, opportunities, and lives are different because, at one moment or another, their path crossed hers.

Ichi-go ichi-e.

For this moment only.

We could not have known which conversation would be our last, which meeting would be the final one, or which laugh, phone call, conference hallway conversation, shared meal, or bit of advice would become something we would one day wish we could experience once more.

But Twyla understood something important about moments: you do not have to know a moment is precious to make it matter.

She simply made hers matter.

And, in doing so, she made ours matter too.

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