



# County of Santa Cruz

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## COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### COUNTY MOURNS PASSING OF DR. LUBELL

Dr. Ira Lubell, who served as Santa Cruz County's public health officer for several years and was a widely respected leader on public health issues, died Sunday in San Francisco. He was 79.

From tutoring Soviet Union doctors on using dialysis to treat kidney failure to setting up mobile pediatric clinics in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, Lubell's career was dedicated to expanding health care access for all. Lubell was appointed as Santa Cruz County's Public Health Officer in 1988, near the height of the AIDS epidemic, and he served until 1994.

"A great man has left the earth," Santa Cruz County Health Director Giang Nguyen said. "His departure leaves a void that can only be filled by the inspiration he provided to us and the gratitude we feel for his outstanding contributions and love for all."

Growing up on the East Coast, Lubell graduated medical school from State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center, and quickly decided his talents were best suited to public health, a discipline that involves improving the health of whole populations.

He served in a variety of capacities over the years, including health commissioner of Bergen County, N.J., assistant hospitals commissioner of New York City and assistant dean of Albert Einstein College of Medicine. After moving west, he served as Santa Cruz County's top public health official, medical director at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center and medical director of the San Francisco Fire Department. Over the years, he was also affiliated with numerous other nonprofits and medical providers.



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He was an advocate for expanded contraception, community-based health services and preserving the right of foreign-trained doctors to work in U.S. medical centers, all of which became standard practice. Lubell was also a member of the Medical Board of California from 1992 through 2005, serving as president in 2001 and 2002.

“Ira was a friend to all County residents,” County Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello said. “He was an outstanding advocate for public health and set us on a course that continues to this day, as we continue using best medical practices for public health decisions and working to assure health care access for all.”

“Dr. Lubell was always strongly committed to effective public health action,” said Supervisor John Leopold, a former executive director of the Santa Cruz AIDS Project. “He worked collaboratively with the community and helped ensure that Santa Cruz County was at the forefront of innovative health policy. His leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS turned the tide of this epidemic in our community, and will not soon be forgotten.”

After resigning as public health officer in 1994, Lubell continued to serve as a friend and adviser to the County, returning for an interim appointment in 2012. He will be greatly missed.