



JoAnn Arlene Medler

November 27, 1944 - July 2, 2018

JoAnn Arlene Medler, a resident of Northport for the past 14 years, passed away July 2, 2018, surrounded by her loving family. JoAnn was born as the 51st resident of Ravanna, MO on Nov. 27, 1944 to Dr. Richard A. and E. Joyce Smith. At age 14 she moved to Lansing, MI, and graduated from Everett High School. JoAnn worked her way through Michigan State University as a runway model for sample bridal gowns and also ran a bridal shop. She earned her BA and MA in Literature and History and accepted her first teaching assignment at Walter French Junior High School in Lansing, MI in 1966. Two years later on Feb. 10, she met her husband, Jerry, the love of her life, during a singles ski weekend he had organized at Mt. Holiday of Traverse City. They were married 12 weeks later on May 10, 1968 in Lansing and recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with family and friends.

While teaching at Walter French JoAnn worked with MSU professors to create the first Humanities course in the state of MI for secondary students, realizing that history needed to be taught in context from the period, not in isolated dates.

In 1981, JoAnn was hired by the Traverse City school system, where she taught at the junior high level and then at Traverse City Central High School until her retirement in 2004. During this time she wrote the Performing Arts Courses and the AP European History course for both schools and implemented them into the curriculum. Throughout her teaching career she taught multiple curriculums surrounding the subjects of literature and history, including advanced placement and honors courses, which were her passion. Each and every class she taught was embraced with a vigor that captivated, engaged and motivated her students. JoAnn enhanced and interlaced her lessons with personal stories, a sense of humor and outlandish, interesting facts. She challenged her students, accepted them for who they were and fostered a sense of trust and respect. Many of her students would take as many of her classes as possible, because they enjoyed her so. Not only did she touch the lives of her students in positive ways, they touched hers as well.

JoAnn loved teaching and traveling with her students to Europe and places they had

studied. Her daily goals were to show patience and compassion and to offer a kind word or a small act of kindness. She wanted to open students' eyes to a wider world, a world beyond Traverse City, beyond Michigan and beyond the U.S.A. She seemed to have a sense of exactly what a certain teen needed. She literally touched thousands of young lives through her gift of teaching.

In retirement JoAnn's greatest joy became time spent with and caring for her grandchildren. She found pleasure with each and every one, understanding and fostering their individual interests. JoAnn continued her zest for travel, sharing opportunities with her daughters to visit friends across the country.

JoAnn is survived by her loving husband of 50 years, Gerald Ernest. Unconditional love and acceptance was always felt by her surviving children: Kimberly Ann Phelps (Darrell) of Harbor Springs, Matthew Evan Medler (Katie Tavener) of Traverse City, Kristi Jo Medler of Northport, and Kathryn Marie Sahs (Aaron) of Northport. JoAnn fiercely loved her grandchildren and was so proud of all their accomplishments and individual abilities: Andrew of Harbor Springs, Maddison, Taven and Rowen of Traverse City, Olivia and Bailie of Northport, and Wyatt, Conner and Riley of Northport. She is also survived by her sisters, Allene Henderson and Sandra (Calvin) Tompkins of Eaton Rapids, brother-in-law, John (Susan) Medler of Grayling, a nephew, Jason (Jamie) Medler of Rodney, a niece, Sarah of Grayling, and two great nephews, William and Evan of Rodney. Preceding her in death were: a nephew, Jared Medler of Grayling, an infant granddaughter, Chloe Arlene, her parents, Dr. Richard A. and E. Joyce Smith, a favorite grandmother, Edna Weaver of Princeton, MO, and her brother-in-law, Edward Henderson of Eaton Rapids.

Visitation will take place from 4 until 5:30 p.m. Sunday, July 8 at The Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home. A celebration of JoAnn's life will begin at 11 a.m. Monday, July 9 at First Congregational Church with visitation one hour prior to the celebration. The Rev. Dr. Gary Hogue will officiate.

Interment will take place at Grand Traverse Memorial Gardens in a private family service.

In lieu of flowers donations may be sent to Child and Family Services (3785 Veterans Dr., Traverse City 49684 or online at www.cfsnwm.org) for children who have been victims of domestic violence, Gideon's International Bibles, or the charity of one's choice.

Please share a memory with JoAnn's family by visiting her tribute page found at www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com. The Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home is serving the family.

Events

JUL **Visitation** 04:00PM - 05:30PM

8

Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home
305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

JUL **Visitation** 10:00AM

9

First Congregational Church
6105 Center Road, Traverse City, MI, US, 49686

JUL **Celebration of Life** 11:00AM

9

First Congregational Church
6105 Center Road, Traverse City, MI, US, 49686

Comments



“ I just learned of JoAnn’s passing. I am so sorry for what is a terrible loss. I have such fond memories of JoAnn during my adolescent years, she taught me so much about how to be a Mom. I spent countless weekends first being a mother’s helper and then babysitting for her amazing children. She seem to know that these were difficult years for me and always had words of comfort and wisdom as well as encouragement. She was truly a beautiful human being inside and out. My heart goes out to her loving husband Jerry and to all of her Children and grandchildren whom she loved so dearly!

Linda Privette - July 10, 2018 at 04:02 PM



“ I graduated central in 2003 and still remember Mrs medlers funny stories and appreciation for literature :)

Stephanie Venturi - July 09, 2018 at 11:49 PM



“ My sincere condolences to the Medler family! I knew her as my daughter's teacher for AP History and several other classes at Traverse City Central. An extremely gifted and giving teacher, I know that she made a difference in my daughter's education! She became my friend, and, although I hadn't seen her in a number of years, I'm sad that I won't have the opportunity to run into her in TC to catch up on old times. JoAnn made a difference in many lives and will be missed.

Jackie Wilkerson - July 09, 2018 at 06:41 PM



“ I am so sad to hear of JoAnn's passing. Prayers for your family from Michael and Loretta.

Michael Cole - July 09, 2018 at 10:29 AM



“ How sorry I am that we will not be seeing JoAnn's quick smiles and enjoy her laughter - a kind, loving mom who raised, with their dad, of course, their wonderful, caring, daughters and son - her spirit lives on. I think also of all the students' lives that she brought zest and appreciation for learning and how her spirit lives on in them as well.... life well lived, JoAnn!

Linda Deneen - July 09, 2018 at 07:43 AM



“ JoAnn's cheerful and loving nature, positive attitude and high energy level never seemed to waver as she managed her family and profession through the years. It's wonderful to read the tributes from former students and colleagues. JoAnn deeply loved Jerry and her children and grandchildren, and loved to talk about them and what they were doing. I have lived across the country for many years and didn't see them very often, so i really enjoyed their Christmas letters. How wonderful that Jerry and JoAnn could have a celebration of their 50th anniversary in May. I would not be surprised if JoAnn has discharged all the family's guardian angels and said "I'll take over from here on!"
She will always be with you.
Blessings to all of you ..Cousin Mary Medler Johnson

Mary Medler Johnson - July 08, 2018 at 01:57 PM



“ I am proud to say that I was on the committee that interviewed Joann when she applied to teach in Traverse City. Before I even met her, I had the opportunity to get to know her through some of her writing that was included in the portfolio that she provided. One of the pieces was an article she had written that was published in, if my mind is not failing me, Michigan Snowmobiler Magazine. Her attention to detail, sharp wit and warmth came through in the piece as I thought that her style reminded me of that of the well-known late columnist Erma Bombeck. She impressed all on the committee, and TCAPS was blessed to have this fabulous teacher on staff for over twenty years.

Joann brightened our days as we gobbled our lunches in the teachers' lounge. Her stories made us laugh and shake our heads, and she took teasing well, especially about her two washers and dryers. We all wondered if she ever slept while making lesson plans, correcting stacks of essays, taking care of her husband and four active children and doing endless loads of laundry in tandem.

Joann was everything everyone shares about her. Warm, loving, and at one moment mischievous and the next showing a little unexpected naivete.

Medler Family, may your memories of Joann make you laugh and smile, and may you take comfort in the arms of the many who, like you, loved your mom so much.

Kay Walker
Traverse City

Kay Walker - July 08, 2018 at 12:50 PM



“ Jerry, Kim, Matt, Kristie, Kathy and family
We are so sorry for your loss. JoAnn as a wife, mother and grandmother gave so much love, comfort and encouragement. Our friendship started at TC Jr High and continued as we both moved to TC High School (Central). We shared so many lunches, filled with stories, laughter and some tears. Our travels were extensive, checking off all the places that our students needed to see. I remember her as my sidekick , my walking historical book, and of course her " let me think about that " comments when asked some interesting questions. I could always get her attention when I would go into her desk, mess up her color coded pens, pencils and drawers. She would come walking in hands on her hips and open my desk drawers only to find I really did have any order at all. She would smile, sit down and attempt to straighten my things out; all the while shaking her head. We were complete opposites in so many ways, but it worked. JoAnn was one special lady ,she will never be far from our thoughts and prayers

Betty Leuenberger, Jerry, Cam (Emily),Justin (Jackie) family

Betty Leuenberger - July 08, 2018 at 10:57 AM



“ Enjoyed working with her for several years. She was truly a delight. Blessings to you all. Mike Paakola

mike - July 07, 2018 at 12:32 PM



“ Loved working with JoAnn at Central High School. She was a dedicated teacher.

Betsy Allen - July 07, 2018 at 05:40 AM



“ Very sorry to learn of Joann's death. I knew her as my good friend Matt's mom, and also as my 9th grade teacher. She was a great teacher. I read Shakespeare for the first time in her class. She loved literature, teaching, and helping her students to discover the joy of learning. I know her family loved her very much and will miss her. So will I. Take care of each other during this time of grief.

Michael Hogue - July 05, 2018 at 03:50 PM



“ Such sad news... Mrs. Medler was one of my all-time favorite teachers. She had so much passion for teaching and her students. My favorite class was the honors literature class in which we read Canterbury Tales. She let us truly delve into the time period and study an area of interest to share with the class. As a future music major, I loved being able to explore and perform music from the time period and perform with a partner for the class. Thank you for touching so many lives, Mrs. Medler. You truly made a difference in mine.

Kate Evans (Simon) - July 04, 2018 at 05:26 PM



“ Mrs. Medler was my favorite high school teacher - she was my honors 9th grade English teacher. She was so engaging and passionate! One of my favorite projects I. High school was the drama project with Mrs. Medler. We went “on location “ to my house and filmed an episode of “Charles in Charge.” I believe she may have even stopped by to see the filming! I am so grateful to have been able to keep up with her through the years through the friendship that Kristy has with my sister. Rest in peace, Mrs. Medler. Thank you for all you did to inspire me!

Jennifer Hegener - July 04, 2018 at 01:02 PM



“ Mrs. Medler was one of the finest teachers I ever had. I fondly remember her very animated approach to English, and how she encouraged students to explore what interested them most. In my specific case, she allowed me to go outside of the specified period for our research project to discuss the impact that the Battle of Hastings had upon the English language. That encouragement, perhaps more than any other I received in high school, is what led me to become an anthropologist who works extensively with linguistic origins in languages. I am eternally grateful for that! Rest in Peace, Mrs. Medler, and please try not to be too hard on ol' Bill Shakespeare up there!

Butch Wright
TCSH Class of 1989

Butch Wright - July 04, 2018 at 10:53 AM



“ I am thankful that JoAnn created the first Humanities course in Michigan because my friends and I benefited greatly from taking Humanities at Mt. Clemens High School. Thanks JoAnn! You were obviously a forward thinking educator. Best class we ever took at MCHS!

Christie Lozen-Looney - July 04, 2018 at 08:18 AM