



Joanne's legacy lives on in the millions of lives she has changed...

Age 70, of Farmington, died May 7, 2015.

It is with a profound sense of sadness and loss that we share with you that Joanne Verbanic, one of the most powerful individuals with amazing courage, strength, kindness and wisdom died May 7, 2015 in Novi, MI.

Joanne provided hope and support to millions globally and helped people to succeed like no other. She is a hero to millions and gave her life as a true pioneer in self-help / peer support programming.

Joanne Verbanic, a courageous hero as she lived an incredible life in mental health recovery, advocating and actively improving the lives of others living with mental illness and their loved ones. In the 1970's and 80's, when schizophrenia was even more stigmatized, Joanne bravely advertised in the media to bring together others living with schizophrenia so they could learn together and support each other in their shared experiences. Her legacy will continue as millions around the world are reaping the benefits of her sacrifices and courage as they participate in the peer support/self-help Schizophrenics Anonymous (SA) groups and Family and Friends Support (FFS) groups locally and via conference calls. In spite of multiple, even life-threatening, illnesses including schizophrenia, cancer and macular degeneration, Joanne enthusiastically continued her participation in SA and as a founding member of the board of directors of Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America (SARDAA).

In 1970 Joanne started experiencing delusions of grandeur and paranoia. She thought the TV and radio were talking about her. She thought her phone was tapped and the FBI was after her. She was hospitalized and received electroshock treatments. It was recommended she go to the state hospital for long term care however she chose to go home.

Since 1970 she had been hospitalized several times for schizophrenia and diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. However, she was able to maintain full time employment until retirement and raised two sons, Doug and Dennis.

In 1984 she wanted to help the less fortunate mentally ill. Joanne had a younger brother who had been institutionalized in the State Hospital for most of his adult life. She started doing volunteer work for the Mental Health Association of Michigan. She was asked to work on the issue of stigma. In 1985 she went public and appeared on TV and radio to help erase the stigma. Until her most recent ill health she spoke at mental health conferences, universities, schools, clubs, etc., to help educate the public about schizophrenia. In July of 1985 she started a self-help group for individuals living with schizophrenia and founded Schizophrenics Anonymous. Joanne exclaimed that this was the most significant thing she had done in her life and the most rewarding. And, indeed, SA has had a profound impact on the recovery of millions of people globally, loved ones and the community.

Ms. Verbanic devoted her life to helping other mentally ill and believed that was God's plan for her life. Joanne said she received so much support from the members of SA and she met the most caring, compassionate people. It was her goal to make SA a national group and now her goal has been surpassed as there are local SA groups internationally and conference call groups internationally accessible.

Joanne is the beloved mother of Dennis (Jeanne) Verbanic Jr., and cherished grandmother of Christina Bowers. She is the fond sister of Robert Gaynor Jr and Jeannette Christiansen. Sadly Joanne was preceded in death by her son, Douglas Verbanic (2014); and siblings, Tim, Jim, and Cindy Fraser.

The Verbanic family will receive guests, Tuesday, May 12, from 9-1 pm at the Heeney-Sundquist Funeral Home http://www.heeney-sundquist.com/memsol.cgi?user_id=1577764. A memorial service in Joanne's memory will be held on Tuesday, at 1 pm, also at the funeral home. There will be a celebration of Joanne's life at the SARDAA conference in Houston, TX on October 10, 2015.

Memorial gifts suggested to the Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America.
www.sardaa.org.

Please continue to keep the Verbanic family in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.