



Mrs. JoAnne Rochelle Duncan-Gibbs

February 10, 1953 - January 8, 2021

JoAnne Rochelle Gibbs entered our world February 10, 1953 and she relinquished this life January 8, 2021. SylverLean Taylor and Malcolm Robinson welcomed her into the world. Because he loved her so much, Alfred Taylor asked for the honor to adopt her and become her father as well. JoAnne was a loving, giving, and compassionate person who had dynamic positive energy. Her 67-year triumphant journey was emblazoned with a smile that rivaled the sun. She was fortunate to have much in life and her generosity rivaled her blessings.

The goal of an obituary is to capture the essence of a person's life succinctly. At the end of one's life, we immediately attach to it two dates – one of entry and one of exit. The dates February 10, 1953 - January 8, 2021 in no way capture the depth and breadth of love that JoAnne spread over all she knew. The most significant character in an obituary is the hyphen (-) between the date of birth and the date of transition. It is impossible to capture the life of JoAnne Gibbs' life in a hyphen. The way in which she lived her life – lovingly, courageously, honestly, laughingly – requires that we change the hyphen of her life to the infinity symbol (∞).

JoAnne was positive, upbeat, and strong. She drew people into her orbit, and it was amazing to see that this was still true after her diagnosis. She faced her experience with cancer as bravely as she faced all the other challenges of life. Regardless of the discomfort and the unknown, JoAnne maintained a positive outlook and she somehow became stronger and more determined as well. Her commitment to her children compelled her to remain strong so that they could continue to rely upon her until the last moment of her life.

A fun-loving attitude about life was evident in everything JoAnne did. Her life was a bright light that she shone on everyone with whom she interacted. Both confident and courageous, she was comfortable in expressing herself. Whether singing along with a

favorite song, dancing to music in a parking lot, telling a joke about polar bears, or laughing while making cookies, she lived her life fully, freely, and unapologetically. Her daily commitment was to trust God in all things and to think before she spoke each and every time.

Whether living in Flint, Michigan, Las Vegas, Nevada, or Charlotte, North Carolina, it was important to JoAnne to be with her children and to be a member of a religious community. Her final church home was the Alive for Christ Ministries. Her belief in God and the words of the Bible were the foundation of her life. Her morality was woven into every area of her life. JoAnne passionately taught Bible lessons to others. The bedrock of her life rested in the verses that she studied. Her belief poured forth each time that she prayed with and/or for anyone who needed it. JoAnne held no doubt about the power of God. Available at any time of day, JoAnne offered prayer and the power of her words brought forth solutions. If you ask people who knew her about her belief in God, they will describe it as “undeniable” or “unwavering”. She lived the Word. Whether in her presence, on the phone, or on video, this guiding force was evident. It was the well from which she drew to advise her family, her friends, and others.

JoAnne’s natural characteristics and her belief system showed in her professional life as well. Her supervisor recognized and respected JoAnne’s work ethic and unwavering determination. She impressed her supervisor so much that she earned a promotion from a clerical position to the Director of the Neighborhood Service Center & Weatherization Department at the Genesee County Community Action Agency (GCCAA). Her commitment to serving those less fortunate than herself was a source of inspiration and motivation to many people. In her capacity as Director, she persistently overcame obstacles. She was a dedicated, enthusiastic leader who demonstrated that being a public servant was a special calling in life. JoAnne used her leadership and authority to mentor and push others toward success. She left a positive imprint on the hearts of minds of all she served, and she maintained her directorship – a position that had historically been held by men – until she retired in the 1990s.

Regardless of relationship type, work location or position, JoAnne consistently showed herself as an inspirational and kind person. She encouraged her family, friends, and co-workers to continue striving for better. She ensured that everyone knew that she believed in them. And if they did not believe in themselves, she held that truth in her heart until they joined her in that knowing. True to form, she modeled her encouragement to strive by earning her college degree, a Bachelor of Arts in public administration from the University of Michigan-Flint in 1996.

After retirement, she became a Mary Kay Independent Beauty Consultant. Her faith-based living, nurturing approach, positive thinking translated from one area of her life to another and from one career to another. As a beauty consultant, JoAnne enjoyed helping women feel beautiful and seeing their true beauty. This new career was a continuation of her life's purpose to encourage and uplift others.

JoAnne stressed to girls and women that they had external beauty but that their most beautiful face – the face of the soul – was internal. She spoke this truth consistently by saying: “You are beautiful and special. You are going to do great things.” Her daughters heard these proclamations repeatedly. With them, though, she added the importance of motherhood – the privilege, responsibility, and joy of it. She stressed as well that her daughters should be ladies with class. The latter was something that you could not teach, she often said. “You either have it or you don't!”

Committed to uplifting the men in her life as well, JoAnne consistently encouraged, supported, and complimented her sons and grandsons in their life choices, ambitions, and appearances. She demonstrated great pride in her son, and told him often that he “was the most wonderful man” she had ever known. Always a doting grandmother, her move to Charlotte gave her an opportunity to resume spending time with her granddaughter, Paris, and her grandsons: Ja'Twain, Khalil, and Autrey II.

All lives have messaging that is often silent, yet indelible. One of JoAnne's messages was to love others even if they did not love you back. She lived her truth that every person's greatest characteristic was love. Her mantra was to love your neighbor as you love yourself because that is the easiest way to empathize with others and it is the best way to be the greatest version of yourself. She believed that the real you must always be intuitive, imaginative, and courteous.

JoAnne managed the delicate balance of protecting her children and grandchildren from difficult truths until they were ready to handle them spiritually, mentally, and physically. Then, she guided them – drawing on the wisdom of the Bible, her personal experiences, and her observations of the lives of others. Regardless of the audience, JoAnne stressed that the work in this life is to serve God, to know and understand who you are as a person, and to embrace all that rather than try to change it.

The way in which she lived her life told you everything you needed to know about JoAnne. You saw her head held high as she stood or walked with a regal posture. Often, you saw her grin slightly as though she could barely contain her joy. She sometimes had an extra twinkle in her eye because she knew she was just as beautiful on the outside as on the

inside. Often, she told her children and grandchildren how beautiful and handsome they were, emphasizing teasingly that they got their good looks from her.

Flint, Michigan was JoAnne's home for most of her life, and she raised her children there. She taught and counseled them so that they were equipped to completely embrace the joys of life and to healthily navigate the difficulties in their lives. Rather than fighting their battles for them, she empowered them with wisdom and words to deal with everyone including bullies and teasers.

JoAnne's is survived by her four children: Tamarla "Tami" Adams, Demarcus "Bird" Duncan, Wren Duncan, and Javanna "Tresey" Pippins (Duncan). Her constant instruction to her family, and especially her children, was to love each other. "Family is all you have; and you cannot choose them." She encouraged every member of her family to be true to her/himself and know that, no matter what, she loved them "to the moon and back". Her hope was that her descendants would be so genuine and kind that there was no room for pride, ego, or arrogance.

She had a caring, loving spirit that expanded even more when she spoke with or spent time with her grandchildren: Paris Adams, Aleah Duncan, Alijah Duncan, Sakiya Duncan, Ja'Twain "Tazz" Pippins, Khalil Sweargen, and Autrey "Velle" Thompson II. Consistently, JoAnne told them to live their best lives and to not chase money. Her message was to follow God's plan and that life's details would work themselves out for their greater good. Each of her grandchildren called her by the same name although each one spelled that name differently. Those different spellings – Nani, Nanee, Na-ne (pronounced NAH-KNEE) – represented how she cultivated a relationship with each of her grandchildren. This difference reflected their unique connections to their grandmother; they each held a part of her heart.

JoAnne was blessed to love and nurture her first great-grandchild, Autrey LaVelle Thompson III. He, too, held a special place in her heart. When she held him, a teary light shone in her eyes. Seeing this child, a third generation from her own, was God's confirmation that she had done some things right in this life.

She stressed the importance of close family ties. To her children especially, JoAnne encouraged close bonds between her children. The relationship between siblings was important to her, and she is survived by two brothers: Roosevelt Robinson and Steve Robinson.

Bloodlines did not limit JoAnne's generous supply of love, care, and connection. Through the connections of love, spirit, and marriage, she readily expanded her family, investing love and care in so many others: children (Kelsey Allen, Jasey Duncan, Monica Gates, Robert Gates, Marcella Ivy); grandchildren (Jaxson Boston, Brooklyn Howard, La'meka Johnson, Montier'e Johnson, Savannah Johnson, Jaiyha Smart, Ariesdryce Watson); great-grandchildren (Chris Brewster, Kaleb Johnson); and sisters-in-law (Charlene Robinson, Rose Robinson).

JoAnne's legacy of love extends through the lives of so many people. After giving so much to so many, JoAnne joined her parents and her siblings who preceded her in death: Leon Jackson, Diane Skinner, Malcolm Smith Jr., and Carolyn Taylor.

In memoriam of JoAnne's life, her children, most of her grandchildren, and her best friend visited Park Road Park in Charlotte on January 13th. Prayers and poems were spoken over the lake. Afterward, her progeny placed yellow flowers on the water. The flotation of the flowers symbolized JoAnne's flow of life in her favorite bright shining color. Both she and the flowers were returning to their natural Source.

What we will miss most are her smiles, hugs, encouragement, laughter, support, and strength. As we list her wonderful attributes, let us acknowledge that JoAnne Gibbs refined the hyphen. Not only is her energy infinite, it is also filled with love So, the next time you think of JoAnne or you see a yellow flower such as a daisy, think "infinite love". That thought or sight is her reminder to us to focus on love, family, friendship, and forgiveness. We can take comfort in the fact that she has only changed form, that she is still with us, and that she always will be so. Each time we feel the sun upon our faces, we know that she is smiling upon us.

Comments



“ Gwendolyn Rosborough-Goodrum lit a candle in memory of Mrs. JoAnne Rochelle Duncan-Gibbs



Gwendolyn Rosborough-Goodrum - February 08 at 05:02 PM



“ Robbie & Monica Encian-Gates lit a candle in memory of Mrs. JoAnne Rochelle Duncan-Gibbs



Robbie & Monica Encian-Gates - January 31 at 12:13 PM



“ Wren Duncan lit a candle in memory of Mrs. JoAnne Rochelle Duncan-Gibbs



Wren Duncan - January 30 at 01:28 PM



“ Everyday that has went by since losing you I have been so lost. My grief is greater than I ever imagined it would be because your not physically here. I know you are by my side every moment in this pain. You were the GREATEST MOTHER and BEST FRIEND a daughter could ever be BLESSED to have. My daily tears are because I have Loved you since the day we met. Until I see you again my QUEEN I will Forever MISS MY MOMMA.. Rejoice in Heaven you say to be absent in the body is to be present with the Lord. I LOVE YOU MY BABY.. until I see you again. Forever your Black Baby

Wren Duncan - February 07 at 10:21 PM



“ Germaine Murray-Davis lit a candle in memory of Mrs. JoAnne Rochelle Duncan-Gibbs



Germaine Murray-Davis - January 29 at 08:04 PM



“ I had the pleasure of working with JoAnne many years at GCCARD. She was truly my friend, and our friendship went beyond the 8 to 5 at the office. Rest in Heaven...

Carol Hill - January 28 at 04:04 PM



“ You were our bright light everyday. I miss you daily.



Javanna - January 28 at 08:25 AM



“ I miss her soooooooooooooo MUCH....I cry everyday

Wren Duncan - January 30 at 01:30 PM



“ My Mother was my Best friend and my Queen so treasured and I told her everyday how I loved her this is a pain like no other. I will always miss my MOMMA

Wren Duncan - January 30 at 01:34 PM



“ Praying with and for you all.
Much Love
Uncle Terry



Terry Gates - January 27 at 01:04 PM