



## Joan Van Alstyne Johnson

March 30, 2019

### MEMORIAL SERVICE DETAILS:

Friday, June 21, 2019 at Dwight-Englewood School (81 Lincoln St., Englewood, NJ 07631). Reception to follow immediately after the ceremony on Graham Field. Parking is available on campus and on the surrounding streets of Lincoln, Walnut and N. Woodland. Suggested Attire: Please wear BLUE in memory of Joan and comfortable shoes. Please RSVP by June 15th: for additional information please contact Sam Johnson [samlacrosse@aol.com](mailto:samlacrosse@aol.com) (803) 681-3337 or Director of D-E Alumni Relations Maria Sanchez Gardner [sanchm@d-e.org](mailto:sanchm@d-e.org) (201) 227-3111

Joan Van Alstyne Johnson passed away as she lived - with her makeup applied beautifully and flowers in her hair - on March 30, 2019. She was born on October 27, 1926. She is survived by her two sisters Keats Van Alstyne Smith and Ellen Van Alstyne Starratt (Dick); her six children Sue Johnson-Parker (Danny Parker), Keats Landis, Kate Johnson (Kevin Schaeffer), Kimball Johnson, David Johnson and Sam Johnson (Kim); her ten grandchildren and her many beloved nieces and nephews. She was proud of all her children, nieces and nephews and especially enamored of her grandchildren. Joan survived two husbands: Edward Fuller Johnson, the father of her children, and founder of the Johnson Redbook Service, who died in 1995, and Ronald Wittreich in 2000, who passed away in 2017. She was predeceased by her parents - David Van Alstyne Jr. (NJ State Senator from 1943-1953 and shortly thereafter and acting governor of New Jersey) and Janet Graham Van Alstyne (a scion of the community) as well as her cherished brother David Van Alstyne III, who died in the Korean war in 1952.

Joan spent her entire life in Englewood where she was a life force in the community. Community service was the cornerstone of the Van Alstyne family, and from an early age Joan took it to heart. At 13, she volunteered as a candy striper at The Englewood Hospital. Two years later, she volunteered at Memorial House, formerly the Social Service Federation (co-founded by Susan and George Graham, Joan's grandparents). Memorial

House later merged into the Bergen Family Community Center, which Joan helped to establish. Children and teenage volunteers were deeply involved in the Memorial House, which in the words of veteran was, “a foundation for life”. Her mother, aunt, and daughter had all volunteered there as well. For the next 60 years, Joan continued to be involved in the social work of the Englewood community.

Joan’s first real passion was early education at a time when it was receiving little attention. Her parents started The Little School (now called The Elizabeth Morrow School) over 90 years ago. Joan was a trustee for 52 years. In those early years of The Little School, Joan’s passion was her work with three-year-olds. She would later serve on the board of Dwight School for 12 years, a school she had attended when it was known as the Dwight School for Girls. She has supported the present day Dwight-Englewood School as a passionate alumna. For many years, Joan would visit elementary schools and read to the children. She loved nature and was proud of her role in helping raise money for The Flat Rock Brook Nature Center, where she was a docent and guide for many years, enjoying teaching children about nature. She also served for a time as president of The Garden Club of Englewood. In politics she campaigned vigorously for city, state and national candidates, always intensely involved and passionate. She worked at the polls during election time, with her children in tow, teaching them about civic duty early on in their own lives. She met with congressmen in Washington on behalf of the Garden Club to address environmental causes and marched in DC on four different occasions: one of which was on behalf of a woman’s right to choose.

Joan was a natural leader. When she saw a need in the community that was not being met, she took it upon herself to initiate organizations to address that need. To that end, she was instrumental in the founding of The American Anorexia-Bulimia Association. She helped to establish The Leonard Day Nursery (now part of the Bergen Family Center), and the County Blood Bank. She was also a trustee of the Social Service Federation for 25 years. She actively supported the Englewood Hospital, Volunteer Bureau, Junior League of Bergen County, Community Chest of Englewood (her father was one of its founders), the League of Women’s Voters, and served as president of the American Red Cross of New Jersey. She served as president of The Women’s Club for many years and was Chairman of its Conservation and Outreach Committees, following in the footsteps of her own mother Janet. Joan often said, “Helping people gives me joy”, and to that end, she gave to, and was a member of Habitat For Humanity; She served as co-president of the Historic-Preservation Committee of Englewood; She was chairman of Washington’s 1776 Retreat and served as president of the Englewood Women’s Republican Club. She offered up her home as a place to fund-raise, socialize, meet, network, shelter, and congregate for her beloved Rotary Club, Southeast Senior Center for Independent Living, Gift of Life

(where she would host families while their loved ones went in for heart surgery) and many book club sessions, always bringing people together. She loved to walk the streets of Englewood, always conspicuous in her blue cowboy hat, greeting everyone she passed. Travel was a grand passion of Joan's, visiting many countries. She was a voracious reader, a book was always by her side. In her younger years, Joan enjoyed paddle tennis, tennis, swimming in the ocean, and sailing, and always enjoying the sunshine and community on the beaches of Point O' Woods and Bay Head. The epic family camping trips to Maine and Montreal to visit Expo '67 became legendary family stories. She was loved by all who knew her and will be deeply missed by her family, friends, and community. Her family asks to keep her spirit alive by giving back to community. Please consider making a donation to the The Rotary Club, Flat Rock Brook Nature Center, Bergen Family Center and SESCIL. Visit the nature center, say hi to strangers, give from your heart, and wear blue. Her memorial service will be held at Graham Field, Dwight-Englewood School on June 21st, 2019. The time will be announced at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to the The Rotary Club, Flat Rock Brook Nature Center, Bergen Family Center and SESCIL.

# Events

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**JUN**   **Memorial Service**                      01:00PM  
**21**

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Graham Field at Dwight Englewood School  
81 Lincoln St., Englewood, NJ, US, 07631

# Comments

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“ Diana Anderson lit a candle in memory of Joan Van Alstyne Johnson



**diana anderson** - May 20, 2019 at 08:36 PM

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“ Joan was a real friend. Her passion for giving 100 per cent of herself was electric. She welcomed Brian and I to her beloved Englewood and made sure we were welcomed by the community and all her family. She did not expect anything for herself in return

**Diana Anderson** - May 20, 2019 at 04:28 PM