



# IN MEMORIAM

## Teaching was a labor of love for Joan Johnson

By Franci Valenzano, Class of '86

Teacher, motivator, mentor, friend.

That is the legacy Joan Johnson leaves with her students after her 37-year teaching career at Morrisville.

Joan Johnson, professor of resort & recreation service management and hospitality technology, passed away March 14 following a courageous battle with cancer. She was 63.

“Joan’s tenure at Morrisville modeled a professional and personal commitment to excellence in everything she did,” said Morrisville President David Rogers. “She was consistently recognized by her students and colleagues for her dedication to their success, the mission of Morrisville and the hospitality industry.”

A 1974 graduate of Morrisville’s food service administration program, Johnson’s career at Morrisville started in 1981 when she joined the faculty as an assistant professor.

During her tenure, she started the college’s International Food Service Executives Association (IFSEA) and was instrumental in the growth of the college’s hospitality programs.

“Dr. J was my mentor. My success in the hospitality industry is due to her belief that I could make a difference,” said Stephanie Rhodes, a member of the first graduating class of resort & recreation service management students, a bachelor’s degree program developed by Johnson. “She was an amazing person who still has an impact on my life. Her students are her legacy and we are legends because of her.”

Always striving to give her students a competitive edge in the job market, Johnson produced graduates whom industry sought based on their rich skillsets.

A champion of her students, Johnson followed their careers long after they graduated.

“My happiest moments are when alumni call to tell me about their career successes,” Johnson said in a past



**Joan Johnson**

interview. “Seeing my students attain their dreams is what I live for.”

Among her labors of love was starting and leading the IFSEA annual holiday pie sale at the college for 30 years.

Proceeds allowed students to attend international seminars and conferences, which also provided them with valuable networking opportunities in the hospitality industry.

Throughout her career, Johnson received numerous accolades recognizing her excellence in teaching and commitment to the hospitality industry, including the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development Award for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, a Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, and the college’s Distinguished Faculty Award. She also received an award from IFSEA for meritorious service and the Outstanding Faculty Award given by the SUNY Morrisville Alumni Association, in 2017.

An energetic leader in her community, she served on the Seneca Federal Bank Board of Directors and was co-founder and president of Madison County Tourism.

“Madison County has a wonderful story to tell, and we want to tell all of it,” she once said about the county she called home for most of her life.