



Sarah E. Johnson

April 28, 1969 - December 19, 2020

Sarah "Sally" Elizabeth Johnson, 51

Sarah Elizabeth Johnson died in hospice care on Saturday, December 19, 2020 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with family and friends holding vigil. Sarah died of health complications from anorexia, an illness she battled for nearly three decades.

Though she faced mounting physical pain and limited mobility later in life, Sarah devoted her days to service and understood that sewing small acts of kindness could make the world a more healing place. Sarah often showered the people she loved with gifts, whether a Bible verse for a friend in need, a beaded necklace for a niece, or chocolates for staff at Shadyside Presbyterian.

When asked, in her final days, for a guiding principle, she paraphrased Ephesians and replied, sotto voce-"Be humble; be gentle; be patient with each other."

On April 28, 1969, Sarah was born at Salem Community Hospital in Salem, Ohio to parents Tom and Betsy Johnson. The fun-loving middle child of three Johnson siblings, she grew up fond of riding horses in Beaver Creek State Park, skiing at Peek'n-Peak, waterskiing on Berlin Reservoir and riding roller coasters at Cedar Point.

To visit the Canfield Fair every Labor Day proved a beloved Johnson family ritual. At the fair, Sarah recalled spinning ceaselessly on the Tilt-a-Whirl, sandwiched by brothers Daniel and Mark, as the midway lights twinkled and blurred. She also enjoyed attending the Salem Presbyterian Church, which seeded a strong Christian faith that would sustain her life-long.

A 1987 graduate of Salem High School, Sarah attended Bowling Green State University. She majored in English Literature and Sociology and studied abroad at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England. While studying at Bowling Green, she volunteered for a literacy project and recalls teaching a 70-year-old man to read, so he could study the Bible. She often cited this as one of her proudest accomplishments.

Sarah also loved to recount traveling through Europe with a close friend after completing her study abroad semester in England. A highlight included pony trekking through the Black Mountains of Wales. Following hours of trail riding, the two friends dined with fellow travelers at a long, communal table, where they drank local wine and enjoyed rustic Welsh fare.

After a stint in Washington D.C., where Sarah studied at the Legislative Studies Institute, she then moved to Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. There, she found success working for Recycled Paper Greetings as a marketing consultant. Clients from across the country took a liking to Sarah for her affable, easy-going manner and keen ability to earn their trust. "Sarah was constantly a bright rainbow of hope regardless of what she went through. She could turn on her charm and people would want to be near her," recalls colleague and friend Gus Richter.

In 2007, Sarah moved from Chicago to Pittsburgh to be closer to her aging parents, Tom and Betsy. Sarah settled in the Shadyside neighborhood, where

she attended Shadyside Presbyterian Church. A devoted parishioner, she regularly volunteered at Bethlehem Haven, a homeless women's shelter, and the East End Cooperative Ministry, where she packed groceries for families in need. Sarah performed this community service, despite suffering debilitating pain from her medical ailments. "Sarah was a light to our church, and to everyone in our community with whom she came in contact. She was kind and gracious to everyone, no matter who they were, or how long she knew them," shared Reverend Lynn Portz from Shadyside Presbyterian.

With her hallmark kindness, Sarah frequently visited her parents in Salem, Ohio and spent long hours by her mother's side at Crandall Medical Center. Even as her own health faltered, Sarah lovingly embraced her role as an aunt to five nieces and nephews and relished attending their concerts and performances and celebrating Christmas together. With gifts and fanfare, Sarah welcomed the arrival of each new niece and nephew. At these cherished family gatherings, Sarah's brothers often joked, whenever they saw each other sporting a stylish article of clothing-"It must be a gift from Sally."

In Sarah's final days, her brothers Mark and Daniel held vigil at her bedside in Pittsburgh, despite the challenges posed by COVID-19. They spent more than a week with her, recounting family trips, providing tastes of her favorite foods, taking her on virtual walks around her neighborhood, watching the "Sound of Music" together, and recording her loving, generous wishes for her legacy. Close friends and members of the Shadyside Presbyterian Church sat with Sarah, as well.

As Sarah reflected on her decades-long struggle with anorexia despite receiving treatment at several of the leading eating disorder facilities in the country, she commented, "This terrible disease has taken its toll on me and has taken several of my friends. They didn't figure out how to fix us, but I hope

that a cure is found soon." While visiting together, Sarah's brothers encountered this line by Rumi penned in one of her notebooks, "Goodbyes are only for those who love with their eyes. Because for those who love with heart and soul, there is no such thing as separation."

Sarah is preceded in death by her father Dr. Thomas Brock Johnson and her mother Elizabeth Anne Young. She is survived by her brothers, Mark residing in Santa Monica, California and Daniel living in Boston, Massachusetts. She is also survived by five nieces and nephews: Shayda and Kian, children of Drs. Mark Johnson and Parrish Sadeghi; Olanna, Luka, and Nulia, children of Daniel Johnson and Dr. Ebele Okpokwasili-Johnson.

A virtual Celebration of Life Service inspired by Sarah's wishes will be held in early 2021. For those who are interested in attending, please sign up online at the following link : <https://tinyurl.com/y9zdz3pq> Friends and family may view this obituary and send condolences to www.dalessandro ltd.com . The family kindly requests that contributions to honor Sarah be held until the service, where organizations dear to her will be recognized.

Tribute Wall



“ Sarah E. Johnson

January 13, 2023 at 04:43 PM



“ I came upon this terrible news just recently, happening upon it online. I met Sally my freshman year at Bowling Green State University in a French class where she sat behind me. One day, the instructor announced a project and I heard a voice behind me say, “Sue, do you want to work together?” That was the beginning of a 12-year friendship. Sally was my closest friend all through college. I spent many weekends at her house, and really adored her mother. I remember how devastating her mom’s diagnosis was to Sally. After college, we ended up in Chicago together, living a block apart. That was the beginning of her illness, as I recall. We eventually lost touch when I left Chicago, and I so wish I’d tried harder to stay in touch with her, so I could’ve been there for her. Sally had an unparalleled inner strength. She lit up every room she walked into. She could part a crowd with her confident, purposeful stride. She had the sweetest, most adorable laugh that always made me laugh. Sally was unique and special, and I loved her dearly. This is a loss I will feel all the days of my life.

Susan Chevront - October 13, 2021 at 06:07 PM



“ Dear Daniel and Mark,

Our condolences to you both on the passing Sarah! Thank you for this beautiful remembrance of a wonderful soul. We love you.

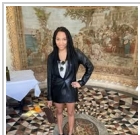
Bertram and Nora, Hauk, Sophia and Nathaniel.

bertram okpokwasili - March 20, 2021 at 02:10 PM

HG

“ You’re in Gods loving arms now, healthy and pain free. Thank you for all the people you helped while you were here. You will be missed Sally. Rest peacefully

Heather Goodballet - March 20, 2021 at 02:05 PM



“ I was very sad to see one of my friends pass away. Sara and I met in Denver CO at treatment and she was the kindest soul I've ever met. She would give me quotes, bible verses or a newsletter that would make my day even when i was struggling. She was the type of person to put other people ahead of herself. I'll remember her love for cold play music and watching James Foley documentary. She was a kind soul and has helped me and will continue to spatially throughout my recovery. Many condolences to the family , Austin Brown-Gibbons

Austin Brown-Gibbons - February 09, 2021 at 04:47 PM

LB

“ I remember Sara from volunteer work we did at the food pantry with east end cooperative ministry
And how sweet and nice she was. Always kind and gentle I heard the ass news of her passing from a mutual friend just a few days ago

Lynda van bueren - January 30, 2021 at 07:08 PM

SK

“ Miss your sweet style.

Sean King - January 30, 2021 at 04:41 PM

NF

“ Dear Mark and Daniel,
I remember babysitting for you three when you were little. I am so saddened to learn of Sally's death. I wish you peace in knowing that you loved her and were such a close family. My sympathy and prayers to you.



Nancy Wooding Fawcett

Nancy Fawcett - December 26, 2020 at 12:24 AM

RC

“ Dear Mark and ;Daniel --

I was so very sorry to read today of Sally's death. I think I first met her when she would accompany your father to the 11 p.m. Christmas Eve service. I will always remember how she and your mother's caregiver brought Betsy to Ash Wednesday worship. Unfortunately, the time of the service had changed and they arrived just as I'd rinsed the remaining ashes down the drain. Nevertheless, they sat down and listened to the choir rehearsal, even making a few requests. I found some anointing oil and offered that instead of ashes. It was a holy moment. When I thanked the choir director, John Krauss, for being so gracious in having the choir sing the requests, he responded, "That's what we do here at First Presbyterian Church." I'm retired now, but that will remain a sweet memory for me. My prayers and sympathy are with you and your families. I know that Sally was blessed by your love and care.

Blessings, Meta Cramer

Rev. Meta S. Cramer - December 25, 2020 at 08:23 PM