



Dr. Avis Donna Alexander

February 4, 1958 - November 30, 2020

Dr. Avis Donna Alexander departed this life on November 30, 2020, after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Donna led a life filled with accomplishment, beginning her higher education at John Tyler Community College before continuing to complete her bachelor's degree in English, followed by a master's degree and Ph.D. in Psychology, all at Virginia Commonwealth University. She subsequently worked serving in different capacities as a medical grant coordinator at MCV before starting her career in the Virginia Community College System as a Professor of Psychology at Northern Virginia Community College and John Tyler Community College. She later served as Dean of Arts and Science for JTCC and capped her career as Vice President of Instruction and Student Development at Rappahannock Community College. She accomplished all of this while raising her four children.

Donna began her academic career while still in graduate school acting as coordinator and researcher on a large project researching medical decision making, when treating patients with congestive heart failure. The research was definitive, resulted in saving countless lives, and improving the quality of life for an enumerable number of individuals around the world.

Although successful and published in medical decision-making research, Donna's passion was education. Coming from a large family and being the eldest sister, her first students were younger siblings, and she was a natural teacher. She strongly believed in providing others the same opportunity for

education she had and returned to teach in the Virginia Community College System. Recognized as a leader, she was selected as Dean of the Arts and Sciences at John Tyler Community College where she was integral in the expansion of JTCC including the opening of the Midlothian campus. Always seeking opportunities for growth, she was selected to serve as Vice President at Rappahannock Community College, where she worked with school and community leaders to provide new opportunities for her students including opening the RCC site in New Kent.

Most important to Donna was her family, for whom she worked hard every day. She is survived by her husband, Dr. Gene Gourley; her children, Alex and his wife Amber, Nicholas and his wife Sarah, Katherine and her husband Ramon, and Grey; her grandchildren, Tyler, Sarah, Emelia Anastasia, Josephina, Angelina, Bryce, and Thomas; her siblings, Edward, Ivan, Andy, Shelley, and Emmet, and numerous other family and friends, who supported her over the years.

Donna was preceded in death by her father, Edward Vernon Alexander of Tarboro, NC and her mother, Marie Carol Welch of Chester, VA. In lieu of flowers, donations in Donna's memory may be made to the Rappahannock Community College Educational Foundation or the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center. Due to COVID-19, the family will wait until the Spring to hold a Funeral with Holy Eucharist at the Fork Church in Doswell, Virginia. Information will be posted at www.forkchurch.com when available.

Tribute Wall

TC

“ *My condolences to you and your family. I worked with her at John Tyler and she always had a smile and a kind word. I remember how proud of me she was when I won the Chancellor faculty fellowship. She was such an inspiration to students and faculty. She will be missed.*

Terri Clinger - December 26, 2020 at 06:11 PM

MM

“ *Love and sympathy to the entire family. Donna was a special friend to me. Melanie J. Miller*



Melanie J Miller - December 16, 2020 at 08:53 AM

MS

“ *"Those we love don't go away, they walk beside us every day. Unseen, unheard, but always near, so loved, so missed, so very dear." Mary Ann Saady and Children.*



Mary Ann Saady - December 08, 2020 at 03:09 PM

SY

“ *She was one of the greatest professors I ever had. I had her for psychology and loved her course. I'm so sorry to hear of her passing.*

Sydney - December 08, 2020 at 02:56 PM

JK

“ My sincere condolences to Donna's family. I worked with her on a statewide higher education board focused on women's leadership in Virginia. Donna was an inspiration and a delight in many ways. What an honor and a privilege to have known this amazing woman.
Jeanie Kline

Jeanie Kline - December 06, 2020 at 08:08 AM

BW

“ I am so sorry to hear of Donna's passing. My thoughts and prayers to her family. I've known Donna since high school and not at all surprised by her successes. My she Rest In Peace.

Brenda Presley Wicker - December 05, 2020 at 10:33 AM

TA

“ An amazing woman that has touched and inspired so many lives. Donna is remembered for her love of life, family, community, and education. Our family, along with the community, will continue to love and support the family as you move through this difficult time.
Todd, Eve, Joseph & Cary

Todd DuVal & Eve Alfonso - December 05, 2020 at 08:15 AM