



Dr. Linda Johnson Stelly

May 29, 2020

Dr. Linda Johnson Stelly “Linda Lu” peacefully entered into eternal rest on Friday, May 29, 2020 at age 72 in Gaithersburg, MD. She resided in Maryland for the last 19 years of her life. She was born on July 12, 1947 to Wilmer C. Johnson, Jr. and Clara Simmons, in New Orleans, LA. Linda’s early education included attending Lockett Elementary School, Carver Jr. High School and Joseph S. Clark Sr. High School where she was the Valedictorian of the Class of 1965. She went on to higher education and attended Dillard University. She graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree in Education in 1969 and was a member of the Beta Upsilon Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. Linda earned a Master’s Degree from the University of New Orleans and her Doctorate Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Louisiana State University in 1991.

Linda entered into holy matrimony with Joseph H. Stelly on September 13, 1969. A marriage that has lasted 51 years. “Joey” as Linda would call him, during their courting and throughout their marriage would affectionally refer to Linda as “Suga-babe.” From their marriage came children, Duane Stelly and Kaira Stelly (Whitmore)

Prior to working in education, Linda was briefly employed by the U.S. Postal Service and to the amazement of others in something not often seen, Linda scored a perfect score on her postal entrance exam for employment! That career was very short lived and Linda then began a lifelong journey through education starting in the New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS) as an English

Teacher at Warren Easton High School in 1969. Linda quickly established herself, becoming chair of the English Department in her first year. She rose through the ranks of the New Orleans Public Schools as an administrator guiding and leading various departments. In 1985 Linda was promoted to Associate Superintendent under the leadership of Dr. Everett Williams and held that position until she retired from the New Orleans Public Schools in 2000. Among her accomplishments, Linda coordinated two tax referenda allowing the students of New Orleans to receive dedicated property tax revenue to support educational initiatives.

Seeing that her work in education was not done, in 2000 she accepted a national position in Washington, DC as the Director of Educational Issues for the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). She would commute regularly between New Orleans, LA and Washington, DC during her 18-year tenure with the AFT. In her work with the AFT Linda elevated the role of labor-management collaboration in Educational Issues in her direction and continuing evolution of the Center for School Improvement Leadership Institute. She coordinated research, policy, strategic planning, and community empowerment efforts that influenced school improvement in dozens of school districts around the country where AFT represents teachers and staff. Linda's strong will and tough-minded nature –evident in all her work--were masked just a little by her calm demeanor, soothing voice, and always present beautiful smile.

Linda was a devoted wife and mother. She could be seen devoting her time to her family. She was a Softball Coach at Goretti Playground as well as active member in Booster Clubs and in all PTA activities. She would often lead most of these organizations and was well-known in the community. She was a fixture in the lives of all she touched and was regularly involved in not only the lives of Kaira and Duane but their friends as well. She would so often be the voice that was called upon and sought out by them for guidance, reason, reflection and action for many situations...she was the "Mother to All!" Playing tennis was Linda's favorite pastime. Whether it was on the courts at

Pontchartrain Park in New Orleans or in Washington, DC Linda competed in the USTA Adult & Women's National Championship regularly and won multiple awards in the senior league division.

Linda is preceded in death by: Father - Wilmer C. Johnson, Jr.; Mother - Clara S. Johnson; Brothers – Wilmer C. Johnson, III and Michael Johnson, Sr. (Alice)

Linda (Suga-babe, Lu, Ma, Gam-Gam, Mama-dukes, Tee, Tee Linda) is survived by sister Dianne J. Ramsey, husband Joseph H. Stelly, children Duane Stelly, Kaira Whitmore (Dondrell). Adoptive son Roy Conway. Grandchildren - Kenyon, Bali (Kaira & Dondrell), Tayla (Duane). Uncle - Joseph Simmons; Nieces - Letreion Ramsey Clements, Neifa Hardy; Nephews - Bryan Johnson, Michael Johnson, Jr. (Janella) and a host of cousins, family and other friends.

Linda distinguished herself as the one with a zest for family, friends, education, tennis, dance, life, love and happiness and the one who energized EVERY room she entered. Friends and admirers were overwhelmed by her smile and her spirited personality.

We salute Linda for a life and job well-done. Although she has left this world, Linda Stelly, remains a testament of what it means to have a good life, a selfless life and a life filled with laughter, love and joy.

“A LIFE IS NOT IMPORTANT EXCEPT IN THE IMPACT IT HAS ON OTHER LIVES!” – Jackie Robinson

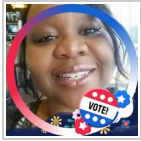
Due to the Government Social Distancing Guidelines, the family prepares for a private service on Friday, June 5, 2020 at St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church, 7300 Crowder Blvd. Interment: Providence Cemetery. Please visit www.rhodesfuneral.com to sign guestbook, leave well wishes, share memories and condolences for family. Arrangements by D.W. Rhodes Funeral Home, 3933 Washington Ave. New Orleans, LA 70125.

Cemetery Details

Providence Park Cemetery

8200 Airline Dr.
Metairie, LA 70003

Tribute Wall



“ *A beautiful person through and through. Thank you for teaching me so much through the AFT. You were truly an inspiration.*

*Yvette A Levy
St. Louis, MO*

Yvette Levy - January 26, 2023 at 10:07 PM

MH

“ *I am sorry to hear about Linda's passing. She was a wonderful tennis teammate and a beautiful opponent, May love surround her family. Mary Hoferek.*

mary hoferek - September 16, 2020 at 10:09 PM

DS

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Donnetta Leufroy Sigur - June 11, 2020 at 11:50 AM

DS

“ *Prayers for a peaceful rest in Paradise for you, Dear Friend. I am soo glad that I got to see and feel that beautiful smile of yours at our Golden Graduation, in May,2019, from Dillard University. Your strength and unwavering attitude was phenomenal,and I thank you for showing me that all things are possible with GOD. Take your Rest in Heaven my Friend!* 🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏

Donnetta Leufroy Sigur - June 11, 2020 at 11:47 AM

BP

“ *Dr. Linda Stelly was a great friend and dedicated colleague in the administration of education for students in our New Orleans Public Schools.*

She was a loving wife to Joey and wonderful mother to her children Duane and Kaira.

I will miss Linda's beautiful smile and the many conversations fun together that we enjoyed over the years.

RIP, dear friend Linda.

-Dr. Brenda Garibaldi Hatfield

Brenda G. Hatfield, PhD - June 07, 2020 at 04:55 PM

JT

“ *It is with deep sympathy that I express condolences for the loss of your loved one!*

Joyce A Tillie

Former co-worker Joey

Joyce Tillie - June 07, 2020 at 03:12 PM

BF

“ *Linda Stelly was a blessing in my life and in the lives of so many others who worked in the New Orleans public school system. She was perpetually a source of joy, offering positive solutions to some of the most difficult problems confronting our children and youth.*

Having the opportunity to work with Linda enriched my life, and I am thankful for the time we shared together. My prayers to her family.

Love, Barbara Ferguson

Barbara Ferguson - June 07, 2020 at 12:37 PM

MG

“ *My sincere condolences to the Stelly Family for your loss. May she rest in peace forever more.
God Bless You All.
Michael & Rhonda Gavion*

Michael & Rhonda Gavion - June 06, 2020 at 05:07 PM

RW

“ *I mourn the loss of such a monumental figure full of intellect and excellence, competence and compassion, finesse and character. I am honored to have known and interacted with her. May she rest in peace.
Rev. Dwight Webster, PhD
Senior Pastor
Beth Eden Baptist Church
Oakland, CA
Fmr Senior Pastor of Christian Unity Baptist Church, New Orleans.
LA*

Rev. Dr. Dwight Webster - June 06, 2020 at 12:21 AM

SC

“ *Duane,
So sorry for your loss of your mother, Linda. I taught English with her at Warren Easton in the 70s. I know you remember all those exciting baseball games between WE and McD35 back in the day when you were player
at 35 and I was the coach at WE.
Your mother was truly a leader in education, working in the classroom and then for NOPS as an administrator. She helped so many on her journey thru life.
Coach Steve Costa*

Steven Costa - June 05, 2020 at 10:36 AM

RS

“ *Linda was relentlessly committed to educating children and improving the lives of others. I was blessed to have work with her over the years, her attention to excellence and equity in education was a staple of her work.*

Ray Sanders

Ray Sanders - June 05, 2020 at 10:15 AM