



Harriet Patterson

July 18, 1951 - August 10, 2023

Harriet Lucile Clark Patterson passed away at her home in Tulsa, OK on August 10, 2023, after an extended illness. A bright, shining force who lived life fully, Harriet gave her all to a career of successful and nationally recognized educational projects. She was an excellent team builder who made her colleagues and students feel valued for their contributions. Well known among friends for her prevailing sense of humor and infectious laugh, Harriet always recognized the best in the rest of us.

Born July 18, 1951, to her parents Dr. Robert and Carolyn N. Clark in Galena, Kansas, Harriet was an energetic problem solver who excelled at many things. She graduated from C.E. Donart High School in Stillwater, Oklahoma as an accomplished student and leader. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Social Studies degree in 1973 from Oklahoma State University, where she was President of the Beta Zeta Chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta. Driven by her passion for reading, she also earned a Masters degree as a reading specialist for K-12 from OSU in 1974.

Harriet's greatest personal treasures were her daughter Paige Harmony Patterson and her partner for the past 40 years, Denna Starwalt. Paige was born to Harriet and her husband at the time, Stephen "Punch" Patterson, on September 17, 1976. Always a mentor and inspiration to her students over the years, Harriet devoted her most attention to loving and nurturing Paige to

become the confident entrepreneur she is today. Denna came into Harriet's life when they met in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1984 and they remained inseparable partners thereafter...traveling to interesting places, entertaining friends and raising their unique collection of pets at their home in Tulsa.

In addition to Denna and Paige, Harriet is survived by her brothers Richard Clark and his wife LuAnn of Bristow, OK, and Stephen Clark, of Tulsa,OK, brother-in-law Steve Starwalt and his wife Sandy of Oklahoma, City, nieces and nephews Elizabeth Layton, Kinnamon Clark, Robert Clark, and Bailey Justus, all residing in or around Tulsa,OK, and Scott Starwalt of Oklahoma City, OK, as well as 8 cousins. She is pre-deceased by her parents, Dr. Robert Clark and Carolyn Clark.

Harriet launched her accomplished and innovative career in education when she and Stephen moved to the Oklahoma City suburbs shortly after graduation in 1974. Her first teaching job was with the Mid-Del Public School District. After moving to Lawton, OK, her unique instinct for engagement and creative thinking truly blossomed while teaching and leading the Adult Reading Program in Lawton Public Schools. As President of the Lawton Area Reading Council, she was instrumental in organizing the "Reading: It's Out of this World" themed parade in 1982 involving over 700 school children and a crowd of more than 3,000 observers, bringing the idea into a very successful reality. This celebration of reading was picked as one of two outstanding projects in the United States by the International Reading Association (IRC).

Harriet moved to Tulsa in 1982 where she taught grades 2 through 5 at Whitman Elementary School until 1988. It was the beginning of her remarkable career in Tulsa where she identified needs and sought to meet them.

In 1985, she became Creative Director of Great Expectations Educators

(GEE), which was her first true, labor of love. She created, developed, and directed a community-based summer learning program for gifted and talented youth ages 6-15. The program grew to serve approximately 300 youth annually. GEE offered four programs: Exploratory Camp, Broadway Revue, Leadership Camp, and GEE WHIZ, a teacher training program on integrated curriculum. Harriet was fully involved in all aspects of the project including curriculum development, song writing, marketing strategies, fundraising, and community engagement to identify curriculum resources. She created and chaired a community-based Board of Directors and established an Advisory Council comprised of noted Tulsa leaders.

Harriet received the Medal for Excellence in Administration from the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence in 2002 in recognition of her monumental efforts to establish the Eisenhower International School by repurposing a 1950's era building that was being used for storage and into "the crown jewel of Oklahoma public education." Harriet oversaw "a vibrant learning environment characterized by a total language immersion program" in French or Spanish, for K-grade 5. Eisenhower was often identified as one of the most sought after programs in the Tulsa Public School District.

Harriet's public education career in Tulsa spanned 30 years during which she taught and mentored thousands of students engaged the Tulsa community in various public education programs and served with many colleagues who shared and supported her vision for advancement through reading and education.

Harriet had many interests besides education, including shopping, traveling with Denna, song-writing, cooking and playing games as long as she won.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to one or more of Harriet's

favorite charities: St. Jude Children's Hospital, Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma, or Meals on Wheels of Metro Tulsa.

There will be a Celebration of Life, a casual come and go gathering of family and friends to celebrate and honor Harriet's life, on Saturday, September 9 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Serenity Funerals and Crematory. Appetizers, beer, wine and other beverages will be available for all.

Previous Events

Celebration Of Life

SEP 9. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Serenity Funerals & Crematory Pre-Need
4170 E Admiral PI
Tulsa, OK 74115

Tribute Wall



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Harriet Patterson.* ”



September 05, 2023 at 09:57 PM