



Anita Johnson Westerhaus

August 25, 1948 - November 10, 2022

Anita Johnson Westerhaus, 74, passed away November 10, 2022, at home, surrounded by the love of her family. The cause was leukemia; she also lived for many years, with dignity and courage, with multiple sclerosis, fortified throughout by her Catholic faith. Anita was born August 25, 1948, in Rock Rapids, Iowa, to Kermit and Evelyn Moen Johnson, and grew up in Des Moines, Iowa.

Anita took up her mother's passion for the cello at an early age. After graduation from Roosevelt High School in 1966, she attended Drake University in Des Moines, where she majored in cello performance and won honors as a young artist. During the summer of 1967, she traveled to Lawrence, KS, to study cello and work as a counselor at the Midwestern Music and Art Camp at the University of Kansas. There she met the love of her life, a fellow counselor, Donald Westerhaus, in June 1967. She and Donald were married two years later and celebrated 50 years together in December 2019.

Along the way, Anita discovered an even greater love for teaching music to children and held positions over 15 years teaching elementary school music in Rhode Island, Kansas, and West Des Moines, Iowa. During that time, she taught piano lessons to pay for her masters and education specialist degrees at Drake and for 17 years was principal of Sacred Heart Elementary School in

West Des Moines. She brought the light of learning and a love of music to thousands of students during her career.

Under her leadership, Sacred Heart was named a National Blue Ribbon School, and Anita was recognized as a National Distinguished Principal both by the National Catholic Education Association and the U.S. Department of Education. She was appointed to serve on the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners by Governor Tom Vilsack.

Anita is survived by her husband of 53 years, Donald, of Bloomington, IN; children, Andrew (Barbara), of Philadelphia, PA, and Jennifer Adams (Michael) of Bloomington; grandchildren, Oliver and Amelia Adams, and Charles, Louis and August Westerhaus; brother, Dixon Johnson, and sister-in-law, Carolyn Johnson, Palm Desert, CA; and countless friends. She was preceded in death by her parents.

Following cremation, a celebration of her life with a Mass of Christian Burial is scheduled for 10 a.m., Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington, with a reception to follow. Livestream of the Mass is tentatively planned on the parish website, hoosiercatholic.org. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial donations be made to the American Red Cross and that anyone who is able consider donating blood.

For a direct link to the Indiana Red Cross Blood Donation Program in Anita's memory, please visit <https://www.redcross.org/donate/disaster-relief.html/?cid=dmappeal&med=direct&source=dm&scode=RSG00002MCLT>

Previous Events

Visitation

NOV 15. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (ET)

St. Paul's Catholic Center
1413 East 17th Street
Bloomington, IN 47408

Mass of Christian Burial

NOV 15. 10:00 AM (ET)

St. Paul's Catholic Center
1413 East 17th Street
Bloomington, IN 47408

Tribute Wall

PC

“ I met Anita when she was a principal at Sacred Heart and worked with her at the AEA. Anita touched everyone she met with her kind spirit and passion for education. Prayers for your family at this time of sorrow.



Pam Childers - November 16, 2022 at 09:24 AM

MM

“ I was very saddened to hear the passing of Mrs. Westerhaus. I always looked forward to her music class at Sacred Heart School in West Des Moines, Iowa in the 70's. She was caring, kind, patient and she really listened to us. I thought it was so cool when she played us the Jesus Christ Superstar soundtrack album. I remember her taking her dachshund Sammy for walks in the neighborhood. Heartfelt condolences to family and friends. The choir in heaven is sounding so much sweeter! Mr. Mark McLaughlin. Peoria, Arizona.

Mark McLaughlin - November 15, 2022 at 05:55 PM



“ Gracious Lavender Basket was purchased for the family of Anita Johnson Westerhaus.



November 14, 2022 at 10:13 AM

DF

“ Daniel Chen and the family purchased the Crysta I Cross Bouquet for the family of Anita Johnson Westerhaus.



Daniel Chen and the family - November 13, 2022 at 10:45 PM

DS

“ My son attended Sacred Heart. She was always kind and attentive to the needs of the children. I am so sorry for your loss.

Donna Stiegel - November 13, 2022 at 04:14 PM

CN

“ Deepest sympathies for your family’s loss. Anita made an impact on so many lives, ours included. Holding you in our hearts, Matt, Cheryl, Catherine & Greg

Cheryl Newhouse - November 13, 2022 at 02:48 PM

SS

“ I am a friend of Anita through MS connection. We met at the MS lunch and group yoga classes. I am so sorry to see her obituary. I have not been going to any MS functions for the last few years and did not know she had leukemia. Sending sympathy to her family. She was a fantastic lady.
Sally Stephenson

Sally Stephenson - November 13, 2022 at 11:51 AM

WG

“ With sympathy, Jo and Gene Gilbertson purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Anita Johnson Westerhaus.



With sympathy, Jo and Gene Gilbertson - November 12, 2022
at 10:50 PM

CL

“ Though I never had the honor of knowing you, I do know that you must have been an exemplary woman - it's easy to tell that in the wonderful person that you have helped shaped your daughter, Jennifer, to be. Rest in the arms of our Lord and Father now, we will meet one day.

Constance Loh - November 12, 2022 at 10:40 PM

KC

“ My heart goes out to Don, Jenny, Andy, Dixon, and families in Anita's passing. For so long I have held her in my thoughts and prayers as she bravely struggled with MS and most recently leukemia. The reality that there will be no more wonderful phone calls between us to “just catch up” saddens me. I want her loved ones to know how special she was, not just as my boss and principal, but a cherished friend. Anita had an unparalleled faith that helped me personally through so many valleys. Her compassion, guidance, leadership, and friendship were inspiring. I so admired and enjoyed her many musical talents over the years To Ollie, Amelia, Charlie, Louis, and August: know that your grandma was so proud of you. She spoke of you and your accomplishments with deep affection. She will always be a part of you. I can say the same for Jenny and Andy. Prayers of gratitude for her life and for comfort for her family.

Kathleen (Kathy) Cox - November 12, 2022 at 02:58 PM