

Barbara Ellen Johnson

June 18, 1961 – January 18, 2019

Barbara Ellen Johnson, age 57, passed away peacefully with family by her side on January 18, 2019. She relocated from Des Moines, IA, to Saint John, IN, in 2014. Due to her declining health, she recently was a resident at Great Lakes Healthcare in Dyer, IN, where she received loving care from all the staff.



Barbara was born on June 18, 1961, in Dell Rapids, SD, to Floyd and Pat (Heldenbrand) Johnson. When she was 2 years old, she was diagnosed as being deaf. She then entered the South Dakota School for the Deaf, which was located in Sioux Falls, just a short distance from her small hometown of Valley Springs, SD. Fortunately, she was able to come home on the weekends, unlike many of the other students enrolled in school.

After graduating from high school in 1980, she attended Temple Deaf Bible College in Peoria, IL. Upon graduating from college, she moved to Rochester, NY. Between those two locations, she made many lifelong friends. Those friends would later become a great support as she faced her diagnosis of cancer.

In 1997, she moved to Des Moines, IA, to be closer to family. While living in Des Moines, she worked at various jobs provided through Easter Seals. Another blessing she had while in Des Moines was making friends with Sonja and Joleen, who would later become her only support with her cancer as family had moved away from the area.

In 2001, Barbara was diagnosed with cancer of the appendix. This cancer became an extremely difficult disease to live with in the following years. There were many times that doctors didn't feel she would recover after surgery. However, God had other plans for her to continue living on this earth. After her last surgery in 2014, she was placed in a rehabilitation facility. However, she wasn't receiving proper care, and her sister, Susan Anderson, and brother-in-law, Todd, would move her into their home in Indiana to care for her.

Barbara once again bounced back and was able to live alone. She remained on her own until the summer of 2018, when the cancer reared its ugly head. From that hospital visit, she would be placed on hospice and live her remaining days at the Great Lakes Healthcare Center. During the last few months, Barbara enjoyed being around others and smiled at all those working or living at the center.

She is survived by her mother, Pat (Heldenbrand) Wiles of Texas; sister, Susan (Todd) Anderson of Indiana; niece, Amanda (Steve) Herrmann; nephew, Spencer (Katherine) Anderson; and dearest and longtime friends, Sonja Kayser, Joleen Gallant, and Tracey Saville.

She was preceded in death by her father, Floyd Johnson; stepfather, Merle Wiles; brother, Ken Johnson; both sets of grandparents; cousin, Kim; and many great-aunts and great-uncles.

A Memorial Service held on February 16, 2019 at the Memory Lane Funeral Home in Crown Point, Indiana.