

Celebrating The Life
of
Mary Elizabeth Mathis-Ford

Sunrise
January 12, 1933

Sunset
November 17, 2021



SERVICE

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2021 – 10:00 AM

OUR LADY OF SORROWS CHURCH

217 Prospect St. • South Orange, NJ 07079

Father Brian Needles, Officiating

Obituary

Mary Elizabeth Mathis-Ford was born on January 12, 1933, in Everson, Pennsylvania. She departed this life on November 17, 2021, surrounded by loved ones. She was the youngest daughter of the late James David White and Sallie Lou Hairston Dalton White.

Mary's family moved to New York City, New York at a young age where she attended Washington Irving High School. Mary later graduated from Essex County Community College in Newark, New Jersey with an Associates degrees in X-Ray Technology. She then attended Montclair State University where she obtained her Bachelors in Allied Health.

‘For much of her adult life, Mary served as member and President of the UMDNJ-Board of Concerned Citizens (BCC), an organization which grew out of the Newark agreements, which laid the groundwork for the creation of the Newark campus of the former University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (now the Rutgers RBHS Newark Campus). The BCC was an external citizens’ advocacy organization which among its many functions served to protect the rights of Newark’s Black and Brown communities in relationship to UMDNJ and to ensure that these voices were heard and represented, using the platform of this organization to assist when disputes arose affecting Black, Brown, and other marginalized people. Always a forward thinker, Mary also used the substantial platform of the BCC to protect the rights of LGBTQ people as well as women in the workplace at UMDNJ. The BCC was sunset when the units of UMDNJ merged with Rutgers University in 2013.

As a personal friend, Mary Mathis-Ford was a trusted confidant and colleague. She and I first got to know each other through her position with Planned Parenthood where she worked for 27 years as a Health Education Specialist. She was a strong supporter of reproductive health throughout the State of New Jersey. It was through this work that she became a fierce and early supporter of the Division of Adolescent and Youth Adult Medicine at New Jersey Medical School. I will miss her warmth, her wit and her counsel...’

Robert L Johnson, MD, FAAP

Dean, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

Throughout her professional career Mary also received countless service awards for her community work and commitment of service to others. She established annual programs to raise scholarship funds for students at the then University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. Most notably, The Robert Talley Scholarship Dinner Dance. In addition, each month Mary and her team held a BCC-Vendor Fair as a popular fundraiser. Through this effort Mary was able to provide Thanksgiving Basket's to the community-at-large and fund a toy drive and giveaway for children who would be spending their holiday at University Hospital.

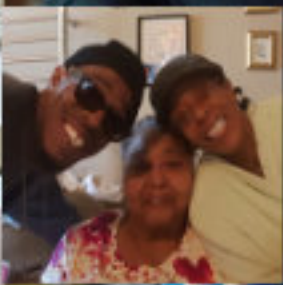
In her early years she was an active member of The Order of the Eastern Stars, A.F. & A.M.; A 1999 recipient of the University's Medal for Distinguished Leadership and Community Service; a recipient of the 2012 United Way William M Ashby Award and numerous others...

Mary was full of life. She was a warm, giving, caring, kind and considerate woman, who carried a big stick and knew how to shake it. She was a giant champion for her community who will be greatly missed.

She was predeceased by her husband, Joseph J. Ford and sons Martin G. and Albert T. Mathis, brothers: William Dalton, Thomas, John and James White and sisters: Francis Dalton Lyles, Ethel Dalton Kimbrough and Myrtle Dalton Craft.

She leaves to mourn daughters, Sharan and Mary Harper of New York; Susan Harper Brown and husband Barry of Pennsylvania; Roxanne Shaw of California; Ronda (Stacey) Mathis and life partner Alvin Howard of New Jersey, and daughter-in-law, April Reeves Mathis; 11 grandchildren, several great grandchildren; 13 great-great grandchildren; and a host of nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

Precious Memories



Acknowledgement

To my Mom's closet friends and family members who were always there and a phone call away – a few of you I know because you spoke to her daily; others who I've missed and may not be listed, please know that she deeply loved and cared for each one of you: Anna, Alkeisha, Denise, Roger, Darlene, Annie, Mark J, Richard, Traci, Aunt Delores, Aunt Tina, Aunt Katie, Aunt Duanna, John, Anita, Priscilla, Bridgette, Sally, Bobby, Ronnie, Lisa, Irving, Alma, April and too many others to list...Thank you!

And I cannot overstate my profound gratitude and love for my cousin, Christal White and my Mom's Health Aide, Millicent Hayford. My Cousin Christal has been my warrior throughout my mother's illness. "Aunt Snookie" always thought of you as her "little sister". I am forever and profoundly grateful for you being there when I called and standing shoulder-to-shoulder for whatever came my way; I pray EVERY family has a cousin "Christal" and/or an "Aunt Duanna". Millicent, who made it possible for me to go to work every day; to go on vacation or to just have a few hours to myself...You were the linchpin. Being the youngest girl, I never had a little sister – I am proud to call you MY lil "sister".

Thank you to Father Brian Needles, Our Lady of Sorrows.

Our deepest love and heartfelt gratitude to all who knew and loved her...

Ronda (Stacey) Mathis, Susan Brown, Sharan & Mary Harper & our entire family

Entombment

*Gate of Heaven Cemetery
East Hanover, New Jersey*

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