

Remembering A New Community Family Member



Lawrence (Larry) Coley was very involved with New Community during his life. Photo courtesy of Courtney Coley.

Lawrence (better known as Larry) Coley was a big part of the New Community family. He served as president of the Tenants Association at Commons Senior, where he spent many years as a resident; was president of the Senior Resident Leadership Council for New Community; and was a long time member of the New Community Credit Union Board. Coley died March 7 at the age of 86.

Coley was born in Linden and was raised by his grandmother, Henrietta Coley, in Orange. He was a member of the Air Force and served in the Korean War.

He went to cosmetology school and became a well known hair stylist in Harlem and Brooklyn. He owned his own beauty salon in Brooklyn, retiring in the early 1990s. He also served as an alderman when Cory Booker was mayor of Newark.

Coley's mother, Marion Simpson, was very involved in Commons Senior and helped get him an apartment in the building in the 1980s. Coley eventually became the Tenants Association president for the building and later was the president of the Senior Resident Leadership Council for all of New Community.

New Community Founder Monsignor William J. Linder knew Coley's parents, who were influential in getting HUD to approve NCC's nursing home project, Extended Care. Linder later worked with Coley for many years.

"He was a good guy, very calm and settling and very much on target with everything," Linder said. "He was a quiet leader who included everybody in what he did."

Lillie Rivers met Coley when she moved to Commons Senior in 1997.

"He was involved with everything," she said.

Rivers helped form the Oldies But Goodies Club at Commons Senior and Coley would come to the group's parties. He was president of the Tenants Association at the time and she joined that group as well.

"He was a very good friend, like a brother," Rivers said. "You couldn't help but to like him. He was that kind of a person."

Rita Hudson, who has lived at Commons Senior for 10 years, said Coley was a nice person. "He got along with everyone very well," she said. "And he loved his family."

His daughter, Courtney Coley, moved to California with her mother when she was 8 but came to the East Coast to visit with her father. She said the visits, which continued into adulthood, were always a lot of fun. They included travel, shopping and eating all

types of food.

"We're all about hanging out and having a good time," she said.

Courtney Coley described her father as well rounded and a people person.

"He had a good heart. He was willing to help people he could in any way," she said. "It was important for him to be part of the community here at New Community."

After suffering a serious medical condition, Coley moved into New Community Extended Care Facility in May 2016 where he stayed until his death.

His daughter said he enjoyed living at Commons Senior.

"He lived on the 14th floor for over 20 years. He had a great view out that window," she said.

Coley leaves behind daughter Courtney Coley, her mother Karen Coley, grandson Devan Coley, great-granddaughter Devyn Madison Coley, son Jeffery Coley and his four daughters, sister-in-law Regina Boles, nieces Sharon Joyner and Atara Ashford, nephew Alfonzo Woodies IV and many friends.