

Extended Care Celebrates The Life Of Elizabeth Brookins



New Community CEO Richard Rohrman remembered how Elizabeth Brookins always put a smile on his face.

Family, friends, residents and coworkers gathered at Extended Care Feb. 7 to celebrate the life of Elizabeth Brookins, who served as the Director of Activities at the nursing home for more than 26 years. Brookins passed away Jan. 4.

More than a dozen people spoke about Brookins, what she meant to them and how she will be missed. A common theme was her big smile and kind personality and how she could be found at the nursing home more than just Monday through Friday, oftentimes running the store in the lobby of the building that sold snacks.

“Every time I came into Extended Care, Ms. Liz was in the store. I got the most wonderful smile, the most wonderful hello, the most wonderful how are you and she meant it. No matter what I was going through at the time, she just put a great big grin on my face,” said New Community CEO Richard Rohrman. “She was just wonderful. And I’m going to miss her.”

New Community Chief of Staff Kathy Spivey read the Prayer of St. Francis, explaining how Brookins embodied the message through her actions.

“She touched my life, your life and all the lives of the residents here,” Spivey said.

NCC Director of Mission Frances Teabout spoke about how one of the ways people experience the love of God is through others.

“Let us share the love of God with others so when our day comes, people can say they experienced the love of God through us just as today we are saying that we experienced it through Ms. Liz,” Teabout said.

NCC Board Member and Outreach Coordinator Madge Wilson spoke about how Brookins was dedicated to New Community, often spending nights and weekends at Extended Care.

“If you ever came to the nursing home on different holidays, you’d see every floor of this building decorated so beautifully, and that we will miss,” Wilson said.

Extended Care Administrator Veronica Onwunaka said Brookins was an inspiration to her and motivated her to go to work every day, even if she was tired, because Brookins was ever present at the nursing home.

“Our character can go a long way to encourage other people. Because we never know who is watching,” she said. “So let’s live our lives loving one another, serving people and doing the best we can because that’s all it takes.”

Father Beatus Kitururu, who led the mass portion of the event, also spoke about Brookins and how she was a staunch advocate for spiritual service. He said she insisted that preachers visit the nursing home and also that they started services at the designated time to ensure all residents who wanted to participate would be able to attend.



NCC Board Member and Outreach Coordinator Madge Wilson talked about how Elizabeth Brookins was dedicated to Extended Care and loved to decorate the facility.



NCC Chief of Staff Kathy Spivey related the Prayer of St. Francis to how Elizabeth Brookins lived her life.



Extended Care had a plaque made in memory of Director of Activities Elizabeth Brookins.

“I’m a priest, but she was giving me spiritual examples. She was an example to me,” he said. “She was dedicated. I’m happy that she insisted that we come here and give spiritual service.”

Representatives from area churches also talked about her warm smile, dedication to the residents and kindness.

A Rutgers New Jersey Medical School student shared a story about how she came with five classmates to volunteer at Extended Care around Halloween and Brookins gave each of them a bag of candy at the end of the day.

“It was the simplest thing but it brightened all of our days up. And I know every single one of those students remembers it,” she said. “It’s just a little shining example of what a kind person she was.”

Retired Director of Human Resources for New Community Cecilia Faulks knew Brookins as an employee, but also on a more personal level because four of her relatives have been residents of Extended Care.



Extended Care Administrator Veronica Onwunaka shared how Director of Activities Elizabeth Brookins was an inspiration to her.

“She was a very dedicated person and I really appreciated her,” Faulks said. “And she was a top notch employee.”

Brookins planned many parties for Extended Care and enjoyed dancing. Part of the evening included a dance from the daughter of Yonette Semple, who is taking over the role of Director of Activities.

Extended Care is accepting donations in Brookins’ name. The money will go toward purchasing tablecloths for the SR Room to make sure it’s decorated seven days a week. Those interested in donating can call Extended Care at 973-624-2020.



Father Beatus Kitururu said Elizabeth Brookins served as a spiritual example to him.



Extended Care Administrator Veronica Onwunaka, left, welcomed Elizabeth Brookins' sister Genetta Williams to the event.



Elizabeth Brookins loved to dance. Part of the celebration of her life included a dance.



NCC Director of Mission Frances Teabout told those in attendance that they should strive to live their lives as Elizabeth Brookins did: with love.