

JoElle Thomas – AD 1981 Nursing

JoElle Thomas, 66, of New Effington, South Dakota, died on Sunday, January 12th, 2020 at Sanford Broadway Medical Center in Fargo, North Dakota due to complications from breast cancer.

JoElle Rae Thoreson was born on May 7th, 1953 in Sisseton, SD, to Duane and Mavis (Olson) Thoreson. She grew up on a farm near New Effington and graduated from New Effington High School in 1971.

After graduation, she earned her LPN degree in Watertown, South Dakota. On November 25, 1972, JoElle married the love of her life, Ricky Allen Thomas in New Effington, South Dakota. They gave birth to two daughters, Tijah Jo, on February 10, 1974, and Nikki Jo, on January 10, 1975. They moved to Avon, MN and JoElle worked at the hospital in Albany, MN. They moved back to New Effington while JoElle completed her RN degree at NDSU. The family then settled in Hankinson, ND and JoElle began her career of service as an RN at the clinic in Hankinson. Soon after, she began working for Richland County Public health in Wahpeton, ND. In 1993, JoElle completed her Nurse Practitioner degree at UCLA in Torrance, California.

JoElle continued to serve as a public health nurse for the State of North Dakota for her entire career, working for Custer Family Planning in Bismarck, and Three Rivers Public Health in Jamestown. She touched countless lives and offered help and healing to people who often had nowhere else to turn. Anyone who has spent time with JoElle in a public place has witnessed many, many people approach her with thanks and gratitude for her help. We know a great number of people will mourn JoElle's passing, that her family will never know or meet.

JoElle received many awards and recognitions for her work. She was awarded the North Dakota Public Health worker of the year in 1988, the Lamplighter Award in 1997, the Love Without Fear award in 2005, the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Dedication Award in 2010 and she was a member of the Red Cross. She was one of the very first AIDS and HIV educators in the state of ND. She retired in 2012 and moved back to New Effington to be closer to her family. Her desire to serve led her to continue working at the Roberts County Sheriff's Department.

JoElle loved her family deeply. She loved horses and took them and her family on many trail rides and to numerous parades. She was a 4-H leader and volunteered at the church. She loved hosting family meals, and making her house and yard as magical as possible for her family. She laughed easily and often and shared her favorite phrases with her family and friends: "I love you to the moon and back!" (long before it was trendy) "Don't borrow trouble from tomorrow, for today is a gift" and many quotes from "The Four Agreements".

JoElle is survived by her mother Mavis, husband Ricky, daughters Tijah and Nikki, brothers Kim and Kent Thoreson, and 9 grandchildren. She considered her friends to be family as well, and there are too many to name here. Her spirit lives on in all of the lives she touched