

Judy VanVranken      Class of 1966, Columbia High School

We recognize Mrs. Judy VanVranken for an esteemed career focused on finding missing persons. A long time resident of East Greenbush, Judy graduated from Columbia High School in 1966. While at Columbia, she was nominated as the “Queen of Sports” and “Most Athletic” where she played basketball, soccer, volleyball, softball, badminton, bowling and tennis. She was a Varsity Club member throughout her high school career.

Judy began her career at the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services at age 18 and worked there until her retirement. Her true passion was found when she joined the Missing & Exploited Children Division. Her position entailed the difficult responsibilities associated with trying to reunite missing children with their families and friends. In the words of her son, David, “this career is not one that comes with high pay nor is it a career that you can just leave at the office. My mother always treated these cases as though it were my brother or I that were missing and that is not something that can easily be emotionally turned off and left at the office. Due to my mom’s tireless efforts, numerous children and adults were reunited safely to their loved ones. The thousands of people that she was able to bring joy to throughout her career cannot have a price tag, pay raise, or profit margin tied to it.”

While working in this capacity, Judy volunteered her free time at several organizations. Among them was the Rensselaer County

Search and Rescue, Inc. This organization helps law enforcement agencies to locate and recover lost or missing persons with the assistance of bloodhounds. She was constantly on call for this organization for approximately 12 years.

In addition, Judy served as a volunteer for Camp Good Days and Special Times. This organization is dedicated to improving the lives of children, adults and families whose lives are touched by cancer and other challenges. In this capacity, Judy's job was to assist counselors with activities where kids could temporarily escape from life's challenges and be happy, playful kids.

Also during this time, Judy was a volunteer for Area 10 Special Olympics. She was a head basketball coach for local children and adults with mental retardation. She served as coach for 15 years. She became a friend and counselor to these athletes. As a result, she attended dances, took them to lunch and helped celebrate their birthdays. In fact, she has maintained contact with several athletes and families even though she no longer volunteers with this organization.

Thirteen years ago, Judy joined the Board of Directors for the Center for Hope, an organization founded by Doug and Mary Lyall after their daughter, Suzanne, mysteriously disappeared from the UAlbany campus in March, 1998. In 2002, Judy was the honored recipient of the Hope Award in recognition of her efforts in promoting awareness of missing persons issues in New York State. With Judy's assistance, the Center established the

NYS Missing Person's Day, an annual event that promotes awareness of New York's missing persons. Judy remains an active member of the Center.

Despite all of her volunteerism, Judy still finds time to help in her grandchildren's schools where she works on crafts, programs and fundraising.

The East Greenbush Education Foundation is privileged to induct Mrs. Judy VanVranken to the Columbia High School Hall of Fame, for her outstanding professionalism and volunteer service and her dedication to reuniting families through our state.