

Expression of Condolence for Joan Atwood by Toronto City Council

Moved by: Councillor Josh Matlow

Seconded by: Councillor Jaye Robinson

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Joan Atwood on July 7, 2022, at the age of 83 years old.

In her 33 years as a teacher at Northern Secondary School, Joan Atwood helped to bring girls' physical education out of the dark ages. In 1962, when she began teaching, Joan was shocked and disappointed to find there were no girls' teams in the Toronto School Board. Having competed in basketball, volleyball, and track and field teams at her small-town Niagara Peninsula high school, and then again on varsity basketball and volleyball teams at Queen's University for four years, she could not believe that the school board of the largest city in the country had no girls' teams whatsoever.

And so began her career to bring scholastic athletics for young women into the mainstream. Joan was an avid believer in the value of sports for everyone and recognized the importance of introducing young women to a wide range of activities. She felt that students benefited in many ways by participating in sports. When asked, she said Phys Ed. was important because it helps to prepare young people for life: students learn how to share, how to take turns, how to win and how to lose. They also learn how to get along with their competitive spirit and keep it controlled. Joan made sure her students knew that team spirit and passion for a sport meant more than just winning. Many students remember her fondly as a great inspiration and Joan's fellow teachers also remember her warmly. Many spoke of her great sense of humour and of what a super team player she was, helping her colleagues and new teachers with resources and teaching strategies. She also sacrificed many hours of her own personal time to coach girls' basketball and volleyball, as well as the co-ed track and field teams. Many of these teams won city championships with Joan in the coach's chair.

For her achievements in teaching, coaching and mentoring, OFSAA and the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario awarded Joan the coveted Pete Beach Award in 1989. Upon her retirement in 1995, Northern Secondary renamed their top female athlete trophy "The Joan Atwood Grade 12 Female Athlete of the Year Award".

Joan's own life as an athlete was rewarding as well. For 27 years, Joan went home to Fort Erie every summer break to play for the Fort Erie Ladies Senior Softball Team, a top caliber Canadian women's team. With Joan on third base, the team won a Canadian championship in 1966 (where Joan was named All-star Third Base Woman of the tournament); silver medals at the Pan Am Games in 1967; provincial championships in 1969, 1970, 1972 and 1973; and eight Bulova watch tournaments at the CNE. Joan was also a team member from 1965 to 1974, the years for which the team was recognized by the PWSA Hall of Fame.

Joan spent over 50 years living in Toronto, the city she grew to call home. Her family, friends, fellow teachers and former students all cherish their memories of this very special person. She lived her life to the fullest and was always a happy and cheerful companion. In her retirement speech, Joan said, "The most satisfying and rewarding thing for me is to have had the opportunity to play a small part in developing an increasing recognition of, and appreciation for, the importance of athletics for young women."

The City Clerk is requested to convey, on behalf of the Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy to Joan Atwood's family.

December 14, 2022