

Christine Sullivan, 72

May 24, 1944 — October 25, 2016



SALEM, MA — Christine Barr Sullivan who lived in Salem with her husband of many years, John Neely, died suddenly on October 25 at age 72. Christine led a rich and remarkable life. A true renaissance woman, her multifaceted career took her from Capitol Hill and the State House, to serial entrepreneurship and community development. She led a community non-profit, chaired a college department, and served on many, many boards. Among her many accomplishments, she was particularly proud of one of her most recent: achieving a life-long goal of voting for a woman President of the United States - if only in the primary.

And for over forty years, she balanced her deep community and career engagement with being a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother. In an era when careers were uncommon for women, Christine managed to have it all, even if, as she was known to say, “not all at exactly the same time.” An extraordinary career, a loving family, and a community of friends, neighbors, and colleagues she treasured. As anyone who knew her will tell you, she was fierce, generous, and loyal to the people and city she loved.

Born on May 24, 1944 in Boston, MA, Christine grew up in Belmont, the daughter of William and Helen (Dolan) Sullivan. She graduated from Vassar College in 1965 and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government in 1975.

Descended from a long line of public servants, Christine’s first stop after college was Washington, D.C., where she worked for North Shore Congressman Michael Harrington, eventually serving as his Chief of Staff. Next finding a home in state government, Governor Michael Dukakis appointed her Secretary of Consumer Affairs, where she served from 1976 to 1979 as his youngest cabinet member.

While Secretary, Christine married John Neely and started their family of five. Entrepreneurship offered her the opportunity to work more flexibly while raising children. She embraced this new challenge, starting Best of Salem magazine, then launching a successful marketing and public relations firm: Hawthorne Associates. In between, she Chaired the Communications Department at Endicott College. In 2002, she became CEO of the Enterprise Center at Salem State University. This was the perfect capstone to her career, blending entrepreneurship and education, community development and government, mentoring small

businesses and nurturing the creative economy. Christine loved the Enterprise Center. She knew and loved the whole North Shore, from Lynn to Ipswich and beyond. Most of all, she loved Salem.

In addition to her work life, Christine served for ten years on the Salem Planning Board, was a member of the Creative Economy Council of Massachusetts, and co-founder with Patricia Zaido of the Creative Economy Association of the North Shore. She also served as president of Historic Salem, Inc., on the Salem Award Foundation Advisory Board, and on the boards of the Salem Chamber of Commerce, the North Shore Chamber of Commerce, Beverly Bank, the Salem YMCA, Northeast ARC, and the Bentley Academy Charter School. She was about to join the board of the Salem Family Health Center. It is this commitment to public service that lives on in her family, and in the hearts of all of the people whose lives she touched.

Most recently, as a trustee of Salem’s Bentley School she was thrilled when it was upgraded by the state Department of Education from Level 4 to Level 1. She was immensely proud of the grade schoolers, parents, faculty and staff. She was in the third year of her “retirement” and constantly looking for new things to do.

In addition to her husband, Christine leaves her children: John Neely, Jr. and wife Justine of Lexington, MA, Abigail Neely and partner Alexander Breslaw of West Lebanon, NH, and William Neely of Salem; her grandchildren Rose and Koji Neely; her brother and sister, William Sullivan of Orange, MA and Mary Sullivan of Brookline, MA; and many cousins, nieces, and nephews.

ARRANGEMENTS: Visiting hours will take place at Murphy Funeral Home, 85 Federal St., Salem, MA on Thursday November 3, 2016, from 6 to 8PM, and Friday November 4, 2016 from 4 to 8PM. The funeral will be private. A public Celebration of Christine’s life will take place on January 7, 2017 in Salem. Location and time TBA. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in Christine’s name to The Salem YMCA (www.northshoreymca.org) ATTN Charity Lezama, One Sewall St., Salem, MA; or to Northeast ARC (www.nearc.org) 1 South Side Rd., Danvers, MA 01923. For additional information or online guestbook please visit www.MurphyFuneralHome.com or call 978-744-0497.



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