



Remembrance of Denna Patterson

By Lisa Trahan

Denna joined the RPI family in Fall 2000, bringing vibrancy and tremendous passion. Student Life became a different place because of Denna. She was care-centered in her work from the moment she walked onto campus until the moment she left.

She would go out of her way to ensure that people got what they needed and was always the one to look out for her work family. If a student had to walk across campus in bad weather, Denna made sure they had gloves and a hat before they left — even if she had to give them her own! She saw one of our cars getting a ticket, and she marched right down to take care of it. Whether she was throwing the office party or setting up orientation check-in to welcome new students, she gave her all. Tablecloths were folded just so, hot coffee served, and her infectious laughter filled the Union. You could count on her to raise morale, frequently bringing in flowers to brighten our day — everyone had arrangements in their offices and armfuls to bring home.

Caring for others permeated her life. As Denna passed a homeless woman on her way to work every morning, she would give her a thermos with hot soup, each day exchanging an empty one for a full one. She wanted to make sure this woman had a warm comforting meal at least once a day.

Denna was also teacher. She enjoyed training others and sharing her knowledge — answering questions, teaching the steps of a process, scheduling appointments, making purchases, and helping with event logistics. She would get very excited when she would learned something new. She would quickly share this information with her team to help them be more effective — all for the benefit of the students.

Denna was the most loving mother, daughter, grandmother, and partner. She showed unconditional love and kindness for her children and stepdaughter, Lisa, Tommy, and Bri, respectively, as well as her grandchildren — Antonio, Lilly, Thomas, Claire, Wyatt, Jack, Pierce, and Quinn, as well as her partner and best friend, Michael. She would often show her love by creating celebrations and events for friends, family, as well as office lunches. She always made more than was needed and it was always DELICIOUS! When she wasn't caring for others she was chasing sunshine, vacationing anywhere warm — Florida and Cancun were her regular spots.

Denna fiercely believed in putting good into the world and this tribute is a testament to that legacy. In fact, she did most things with fearlessness. Even when Denna was in the hospital, with all that she was going through, she was helping the woman next to her, making sure she could reach her phone and anything else she needed.

So much more than a position or a title could ever contain, Denna was a friend, a mother, a daughter, a grandmother, a colleague, a confidant, and more. Denna led with her heart and took care of the people around her. She will truly be missed more than words can express.