



## Joanie Brusseau

June 21, 1960 - February 15, 2023

On February 15, 2023, Joanie Brusseau, 62, breathed her last and snuggled into the lap of her Heavenly Father. His strong and gentle arms envelop her. Joanie's life is marked by her faith, her thirst for God's Word, and her compassion for children.

A Homegoing Celebration will be held Saturday, February 25, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. at Hope Evangelical Free Church in Storm Lake. Pastor Arthur Jackson and Pastor James Roland will be officiating. To watch the livestream of the service, use following link: <https://www.facebook.com/hopeefreechurch> or search Facebook Hope Evangelical Free Church of Storm Lake. The service will be live-streamed at 11:00 a.m. CST. The Fratzke & Jensen Funeral Home in Storm Lake are in charge of arrangements.

Jean Denise (Joanie) was born on June 21, 1960, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, to Gilbert and Alice Brusseau and became the youngest sister to Mary Ellen, Karen and Michelle. At a young age, her family moved to Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

After many challenging years, Joanie was re-born on September 10, 2000, at 5:07 pm when she discovered the love of her Heavenly Father and accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Saviour.

Having experienced brokenness through childhood trauma, Joanie was a

strong advocate for both mental health and spiritual health. Looking back on her life, Joanie could see the hand of God over her, and His fingerprints in the finest details of her life. In her darkest moments, her dog, Azia, never left her side. Later, a well-timed phone call brought her from the brink of death by suicide, to a bus where she would finally comprehend the love of her heavenly Father and accept Jesus as Lord of her life. It was then, that God took her out of SRO housing and brought her to Judson Church. Her testimony is one of redemption and restoration, and the power of Jesus Christ to dramatically change lives.

Joanie flourished in her new life, joined Judson Baptist Church, and became interested in missions after travelling to the Pan African Christian Exchange (PACE) in Nyahururu, Kenya. Encouraged by her church family at Judson, in 2006 Joanie graduated from Northeastern University with a bachelor's degree in Education (summa cum laude). After graduating, she returned to her beloved Kenya.

Her years in Nyahururu were some of the best times of her life. Her family group grew with the addition of the James Roland family, the Wachira Ngamau family and the Irungu Gichinga family. All of the mission school students became her children. Movie nights and the children's Sunday worship services gave her great joy. Working with the kids at PACE filled Joanie's heart to over-flowing. Apparently, it became too full, and her heart cracked. Joanie suffered multiple heart attacks over the next few years, causing her to travel back and forth between Chicago and Kenya until her final return to America in 2013, following medical advice.

Though her legacy in Nyahururu could be wrapped up in the many projects that she worked on, including Shoes for School, a milk project and the Kenya Get Well water project, her greatest legacy will be found in the lives of the children at PACE. In 2021, Joanie participated with Kathy Isaac who wrote the

book, *Don't Tell: Finding Home After Family Betrayal* which chronicles her faith story.

On her return to America, Joanie lived and worked in Chicago, and later moved to Storm Lake, Iowa to be close to the Rolands, who had welcomed her into their family. There, she worshipped at Hope Evangelical Free Church and served on the board of The Bridge of Storm Lake. Once more, she was surrounded by children, and her family grew yet again.

Joanie was resilient, and with God's Word at her side, she overcame mental illness. She persevered through the effects of diabetes, which eventually weakened her heart and kidneys. There is so much gratitude among Joanie's friends and family to Jo Beth Lee (Roland) for the blessing of the kidney that would give Joanie an additional ten months of life. Joanie fought hard to live and lived to serve Jesus. On one trip to the hospital, Joanie was determined to find out who didn't yet know Jesus, because He kept sending her back there, and she didn't want to have to go back again. She always knew that Jesus had a purpose for her wherever she was, and now her purpose is to forever praise Jesus.

We will all remember the boisterous Joanie, whose hearty laugh would fill a large room. By now, no doubt, all heaven knows she has arrived, and she has been welcomed by the great cloud of witnesses who she joins in worship. A precious few will remember the quieted Joanie, who, as evening drew near, would pensively reflect on the day and ponder the ways of the Lord.

She will be missed by many friends, and those who considered her family, especially James, Heidi, Maria, Sophia, Peter and William Roland, Ruth and Bob, Faith, Lydia, Isaac and Matthew Whitmore, Toni Horras and family, Janie (Ma-J) Yarbrough, Kajaria Yarbrough, Irungu Gichinga, Rahab Njoki (Mamma

Simon), Simon, James, Brian, and JoanGrace Gichinga, Wachira and Glenda Ngamau and family, Gary and Kathy Isaac, and all mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and many children who God blessed her with, and whose lives she touched. Joanie leaves behind a son, Brian. She was preceded in death by an unborn daughter, and a trusted companion, her dog Azia.

# Previous Events

## Homegoing Celebration

FEB **25**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Hope Evangelical Free Church  
2015 W. Milwaukee Ave.  
Storm Lake, IA 50588

# Tribute Wall

BE

“ Today I was sorry to see that Joanie passed away over 2 years ago. We dated a couple years when we were 18 and 19. We were young. I loved her and knew her life. She was thoughtful and intelligent and joyful. I think of her often especially on the summer solstice, the longest sunlight of the year. A perfect day for her birthday. I always hoped she would find a life with children as I knew she was a good and giving mother. I remember the special birthdays she had for her Brian. I'm glad she was able to find love in her ministry. Miss ya Bruss❤️

Ben - April 11, 2025 at 10:52 AM

PM

“ I got to know Joanie when I was a guest for three weeks in her home in Nyahururu, Kenya. We were three guests, at the time. What struck me about Joanie was her love and joy for the work she did and her love of people. She openly shared her life and home and the wisdom she gained during her life. So glad to have met her and have , forever, the memories of that time together. Pat MacNeil

Pat MacNeil - June 26, 2023 at 08:37 AM



“ Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Joanie Brusseau.



February 24, 2023 at 11:25 AM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Joanie Brusseau.*



February 23, 2023 at 07:19 AM



“ *Met at Pace. Best friend and workmates*

**Samson Wambugu/from kenya** - February 22, 2023 at 07:58 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Joanie Brusseau.*



February 21, 2023 at 10:39 PM



“ *Ooh my God why go so soon Joanie it's sad I know right 😞 we loved you but God has loved you more... I remember at pace ministries the good memories we shared you would bring movies to watch with us, you loved to take us photos and especially me you would tell me Ishimwe smile 😍 and you the best mum I had at pace the birthdays you did for me every year ooh God you were such a good soul, you loved us , you cared alot..I have a lot to say and you will forever be in my heart and also my sister aline. May your soul rest in peace 🙏*



**Oscaline Ishimwe** - February 21, 2023 at 01:54 PM

EP

“ Joanie always had the prettiest smile at church and a big greeting for me. Sometimes we would meet for lunch at a local restaurant - she showed such interest in my life and my teaching job. She always had words of encouragement for me and she lived with a heart of thankfulness for all her many blessings. I will miss you, Joanie, and look forward to seeing you again when in Heaven!

Elizabeth Pattie - February 18, 2023 at 06:05 PM

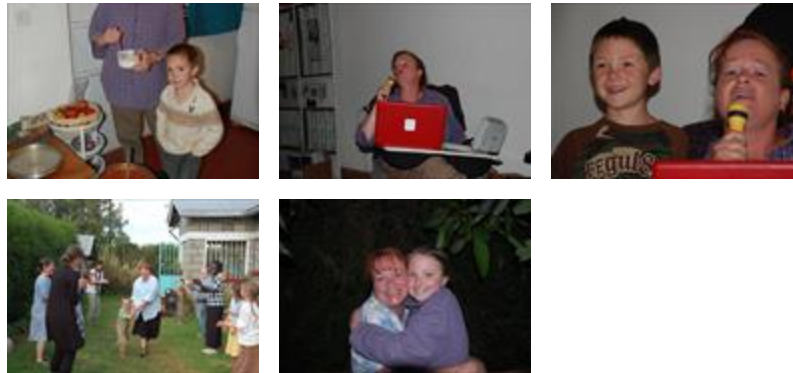
BK

“ Joanie was such an inspiration. Always a smile and a hug. So enjoyed our coffees in the park and our Bible study groups. You will be missed by your church family. RIP.

Bonnie and Stan Kirkholm - February 18, 2023 at 05:59 PM



“ 14 files added to the album Joanie



Sophia Roland - February 18, 2023 at 04:35 PM



Thanks for sharing these photos Sophia. It's so much fun to see her in her element.

Matt Kristy McClellan - February 19, 2023 at 10:31 PM

TS

“ Oh Joanie, you were always smiling no matter what you faced, thanks for the hugs and for being you. I will miss you, but I know that you are in most beautiful place. Until we meet again.

---

**Trudy J Schroeder** - February 17, 2023 at 04:13 PM

LO

“ Joanie - I will miss your smile and your laugh. You were a ray of sunshine when you came in for your appointments. I'm glad I got the chance to meet you.

~Lynn

---

**Lynn O** - February 17, 2023 at 11:13 AM

EL

*It's extremely difficult to say goodbye knowing too well you had promised to come back to Kenya...till we meet again my dear Joannie fare thee well*

---

**Elizabeth** - February 19, 2023 at 09:47 AM