



Dr. James S. Vacca

September 20, 1946 - December 7, 2013

Donations may be made in memory of Dr. James S. Vacca to:

Parish Outreach Trocaire House

400 Main Street

Huntington, NY 11743

385-3311 ext 216

<http://www.stpatrickchurchhunt.org/trocaire.html>

March of Dimes New York Chapter

<http://www.marchofdimes.com/newyork/>

Autism Speaks

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/>

Educator, Professor, Advocate, Author

Dr. James S. Vacca, of Huntington, NY and Ocean City, NJ, died December 7th at Mercy Medical Center in Rockville Centre. He was 67. Born in Schenectady, NY to Salvatore and Marion (Mates) Vacca, Dr. Vacca attended Mont Pleasant High School and graduated from SUNY Brockport; he earned his M.S. from SUNY Albany and his Ph.D. from Syracuse University. He also did additional studies at S.U.N.Y. Buffalo and Michigan State University.

Dr. Jim Vacca most recently served as an Associate Professor of Special Education and Literacy at St. John's University, Special Education/Literacy Consultant to the Westbury Middle School, Metropolitan Corporate Academy High School in Brooklyn, a Foster Youth Advocate for the Department of Social Services, and a consultant to the Liberty Partnership School in Washington DC, and the AWIXA Educational Program planning committee. Jim began his career in education as a teacher at the University of Buffalo where he taught Persuasive Communication. Jim also served as the University Debate Team Coach. He went on to teach sixth grade, elementary and secondary Reading, and Special Education in the Schenectady, City School District. While in the Schenectady City School District, Jim was the district's Reading Diagnostician and he also wrote and directed the "Intensive Reading Instructional Team (IRIT). This federal replication grant was a model program for remedial reading for the elementary grades. Jim also implemented the "Engineered Classroom," a model classroom behavioral program based on the behavioral theories of both B.F. Skinner and Frank Hewitt.

Jim's first administrative position was as Supervisor of Special Education at Albany, Schenectady, Schoharie BOCES. In 1976, Jim developed and implemented one of the first classroom programs for children with autism in Albany, New York. This model secondary program took six students from a developmental center and provided them with their first educational learning experience in a general education school environment.

While in Albany, Jim began his graduate teaching career in Special Education and Literacy at Russell Sage College and SUNY Albany. For ten years Jim also taught reading for Skidmore College to college bound inmates at Great Meadow Correctional Facility in Comstock, New York. In addition, he taught the Upward Bound Summer Reading Program for college students entering Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), Skidmore, Union, Russell Sage, and Siena colleges. Jim served as President of the New York State Reading Association and Editor of the Legislative Newsletter "NYSEA Speaks" for the

New York State Council of Educational Associations.

Jim moved to Long Island to assume the role of Principal of the Alternate Learning Center at Western Suffolk BOCES. While at Western Suffolk BOCES he developed and implemented the Positive Alternative for Student Success (PASS) Program at SUNY Farmingdale. This program saw high school students with emotional difficulties achieve their diplomas in non-traditional classes on a college campus. Following his tenure at BOCES Jim moved to the Commack School District as Director of Student Services. For more than a decade he was responsible for the school district reorganization plan, a variety of state and federal grant programs and all Pupil Personnel Services. Working with March of Dimes staff, he jointly created the position of Volunteer Coordinator for the district. This program brought in community members to serve as volunteers for a wide variety of school district programs. In addition to the Commack School District, Jim has also worked for the Uniondale, Sewanhaka, and Malverne School Districts. He served as a Director of Special Education, Guidance Director, Special Grant Programs/Reading Director, and Director of Pupil Personnel Services. Jim was also the Educational Director of the Lake Grove School, a Residential Treatment Center on Long Island. Dr. Vacca served as Chair of the Department of Special Education and Literacy in the School of Education at Long Island University and Director of the CASE Program, a Masters Degree program for graduate students specializing in teaching children with Autism Spectrum disorders until the summer of 2013. He also taught as an Adjunct Professor of Literacy at Adelphi University from 1985 to 1997.

For the past ten years Jim has served as Educational Consultant and Foster Child Advocate for the Department of Social Services in Suffolk County. In 2010, Jim was a recipient of the Suffolk County Child Abuse and Neglect Violence Volunteer and Professional Award from the Suffolk County Advisory Board on Child Protection and the Suffolk County Executive's Task Force to Prevent Family Violence. He was a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of

the Eagle Reading Series for the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (HBJ) publishing company. Jim has published sixteen articles dealing with: the education of foster children; children with autism; Scaffolding Learning techniques; and incarcerated children/adults in several education and social work academic journals, including the Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, Journal of Correctional Education, and the Children and Youth Services Review. He has also recently presented at several national, state, and local workshops at conferences related to Special Education, Autism, Criminal Rehabilitation, Foster Children, Scaffolding and Literacy Education.

Described by family members as “a true people person”, he loved spending time with his extended families and many close friends. He collected baseball memorabilia and had an encyclopedic memory for music trivia.

Dr. Vacca is survived by his wife of 44 years, Mary (Sweeney); his daughters Claire Lamy (Ryan) of Annapolis, Elena Gerken (Gregory) of Holbrook, and Dr. Maria Vacca (Brennan Matuza) of San Francisco; as well as three grandchildren, Madeline and Colin Lamy and Robert Gerken; and two brothers, Richard Vacca and Raymond Vacca, and nieces and nephews. He is preceded in death by his parents, his brother Joseph, and his beloved cat Doobie.

Previous Events

Tuesday Visitation

DEC **10**. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

A.L. Jacobsen Funeral Home, Inc.
1380 New York Avenue
Huntington Station, NY 11746
(631) 423-2185
jacobsenfuneral@gmail.com

Tribute Wall



“ *A.L. Jacobsen Funeral Home, Inc. created a Tribute Video in memory of Dr. James S. Vacca*



A.L. Jacobsen Funeral Home, Inc. - December 07, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ *Dr. James S. Vacca*

November 27, 2022 at 05:33 PM

CJ

“ Dear Mary,

Susan and I were so sad to hear about Jim's passing. I remember what an inspirational teacher he was when I was a student in his Speech and Communication class at UB; and we both remember all the good times we had with both you and Jim when Susan and I were in the school psych program at the University at Albany.

You might recall our wonderful weekend trip to Boston...when it was ten degrees below zero. (How could you forget?) We also fondly remember being guests at your charming garret apartment in Schenectady and how you were so excited about buying your beautiful first house. (I also remember the Clint Eastwood poster in your living room for some reason.)

We thank you and Jim for your friendship. It still means so much to us after all these years.

Craig & Susan Johnson

P.S. If you get a chance, please e-mail us at shortshrinksj@yahoo.com, or give us a call at 928-204-2262. We'd love to hear from you!

Craig & Susan Johnson - April 03, 2014 at 09:12 PM

MG

“ *Dr. Vacca was my professor last year. A very great and loving man. He had a great sense of humor and made me want to lean about autism so much more than i have. He inspired me to go for my bcba in the future. Just waiting to graduate w my dual certification and case extension then I'll begin to study for the exam. One day when I hold the title I will always think of him. My hopes and prayers for his family and friends*

michele Greenfield - December 16, 2013 at 04:12 PM

SH

“ *Dr. Vacca was my professor and a member of my dissertation committee. He was so inspirational. I will truly miss his encouraging words and supportive actions.*

Sadeka Harris - December 15, 2013 at 12:47 PM



“ *I have the fondest memories of my uncle Jim he was a great man. he was smart and also very funny and kind. I enjoyed going to their house and swimming in a pool and cooking and barbecuing and sleeping over for the weekend. there are so many other fun memories and one of them was the first after all the children I got to see grow up. I love him and I will miss him dearly. love your niece Kimberly Vacca*

Kimberly Vacca - December 15, 2013 at 10:57 AM

JR

“ *To the Vacca Family:*

Jim's passing is an extremely sad loss for both his family, friends and business constituents. He will sorely be missed. I had the pleasure of working with Jim when he was principal at LGS. Jim was very professional and always willing to help both staff and students. Please accept my condolences and prayers and know that he left behind a great memory of being a benevolent and highly dedicated man. Once again, please accept my most sincere sympathies. Sincerely, Judy A. Ryan & Family.

Judy Ryan - December 11, 2013 at 09:12 AM

MS

“ My deepest condolences to you Mary and your daughters and their families. DR. JIM VACCA was a special human being. No one was more caring and understanding and always with a beautiful smile. I was his secretary in Uniondale and will always remember his love for humanity and for you Mary.
May he rest in peace and peace be with you Mary.
Millie Santorelli

Millie Santorelli - December 10, 2013 at 04:39 PM

EK

“ Mr. Vacca was a genuine, kind, loving man. He always made me feel welcome and like one of his own. Whether we girls were swimming in the pool, dancing in front of the mirrors in the living room, or making a mess in the kitchen, Jim always flashed his smile and stayed patient with us. Im honored to have known such an amazing soul, and am grateful for him raising such beautiful ladies and for bringing my absolute best friend into the world, Elena. I'm sorry that i can't be there in person, but please know that Mary, Claire, Maria, Elena, and the rest of your family, you are all in my thoughts and i love you. May your sweet Jim rest in peace. Love and Light.

Erin Kirrane - December 10, 2013 at 04:10 PM

ST

“ We all have but one lifetime, however in the minds of those we have touched, the memories are forever. Thank you Jim.
Scott Tornis

Scott T - December 10, 2013 at 11:24 AM

LT

“ My deepest sympathies to Mary, my friend and colleague, and to her daughters and their families. I worked with Dr Vacca at C W Post and he was a delight to work with- empathetic, he had a great sense of humor, was very hard working, very approachable at all times. He was a great asset to LIU Post, and he will be sorely missed by friends and colleagues alike. My deepest sympathies are extended to his wife Mary, whom I worked with for many years. I also extend my deepest sympathies to her daughters and their families. May he find eternal rest with his Maker.

Lorraine Tawfik

Lorraine Tawfik - December 10, 2013 at 10:34 AM

LF

“ Lorraine Tawfik and family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Dr. James S. Vacca.



Lorraine Tawfik and family - December 10, 2013 at 10:28 AM



“ Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of Dr. James S. Vacca.



December 10, 2013 at 10:09 AM

JP

“ Jim and I taught together at the Martin Luther King Elementary in Schenectady NY. We became good friends and I bought my house next to his. Our families became close and I loved him and Mary. I am devastated over his passing. I haven't been able to think of anything else. Linda and I are in California visiting our daughter and will not be able to be at the services. We wish to extend our deepest sympathies to Mary and the girls. Also Jim's family. I have lost a lifelong friend but his kindness and generosity will be in my heart forever.

Joe Parillo - December 10, 2013 at 09:36 AM

WS

“ Dr. Vacca was a gentleman, kind and considerate. I worked with him briefly and could only say kind words about him.

wsimpson

wsimpson - December 10, 2013 at 07:55 AM



“ Dr. Vacca was a wonderful mentor and colleague who shared so much of himself with his students and co-workers! I was so fortunate to know him and to hear the stories that made his life so wonderful, colorful, and sacred. He loved his family so dearly and spoke much of how they were the most important people in his life. I admired him greatly and truly miss his sweet presence. Your friend,
Brian Cotter

Brian Cotter - December 09, 2013 at 06:09 PM

NF

“ I was a member of a week - long seminar class at C.W. Post this summer in which Dr. Vacca was a professor. He brought in breakfast on Friday and at the end of the day humbly noted we were his last students as he was to begin a new position at St. John's. I congratulated him and wished him good luck but I was disappointed because it would have been great to have more opportunities to take classes with him locally. I am a Uniondale School District librarian and I would like to tell you that I am sure many have a similar feeling because they worked with him. My condolences to all.

Nancy Froehlich - December 09, 2013 at 06:08 PM

JH

“ *Mary, Claire, Elena, Maria,*
A few words to say my thoughts are with you at this time, I am so sorry.
Many years later, I still remember distinctly the sound of Jim's voice. It was a peaceful, reassuring, happy voice. This sound will always be in your head and hearts to comfort you as you move forward and find peace again.
Sending you strength,
Jennifer Hutt

Jennifer Hutt - December 09, 2013 at 04:44 PM

KL

“ *Mary and family,*

My heart goes out to all of you as you mourn the passing of a fine man who loved his family deeply. I had the privilege of working with Jim for over ten years at LIU Post. Jim was a man of character and integrity, and he had the courage to stand for what he believed. He loved children and his passing is a loss for his profession; he is and will continue to be missed.

May you find God's peace.

Kathy Lusteg

kathy lusteg - December 09, 2013 at 03:12 PM

EM

“ *curious dawn hail
gently blankets the chill lawn
with still white marbles.*

—Edmund Miller

Edmund Miller - December 09, 2013 at 03:02 PM

KM

“ *"For your faithful people, life has not ended but changed". Thoughts and prayers of love, sympathy and compassion are being sent to Mrs. Vacca, Claire, her sisters and the entire Vacca family. We are blessed to work with Claire and with this reality know that both Mr. and Mrs. Vacca must also be incredible people. May God grant you all courage, peace and confident trust through this most difficult journey. We walk with you albeit from a distance with continued prayers and open arms when you return.*
Love, Kathy Mayer

Kathy Mayer - December 09, 2013 at 02:29 PM



“ *Written in the Stars was purchased for the family of Dr. James S. Vacca.*



December 09, 2013 at 01:27 PM



“ *Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Dr. James S. Vacca.*



December 09, 2013 at 09:39 AM



“ *Jim was one of the most upbeat, hilarious, caring, kindhearted, and loving people I've ever had the pleasure of knowing - and I feel so lucky to have known him for pretty much my entire life. There are countless memories and bouts of laughter that I have Jim to thank for...way too many to recount them all. Jim's warmth was always radiating, whether he was sitting in the car waiting to pick Maria and I up from Gymnastics, walking Claire and Elena down the aisle at their weddings, or taking a break from the sun in Ocean City to watch Days. I loved Jim like a father and will be forever grateful to him for bringing me so much joy. I will, of course, also be forever grateful to him for bringing the Vacca women into this world. He will always be remembered with the fondest of memories and will always have a place in my heart.*

Lindsay Schlauch - December 09, 2013 at 12:00 AM

RB

“ Jim was one of the kindest and most genuine men I have ever known. Always quick with a smile and a hug, Jim was nice to everyone without exception. Lots of great memories of baseball card shows, sleigh riding at the Crescent Club, riding around in his Buick with his daughter, and my best friend Claire....many times without his explicit approval, I might add, jello pudding pops, and so much more. I will think of him in his blue blazer, shorts, and loafers, enjoying a slice and listening to rock n roll tunes. He will be sorely missed.

Robyn Bogash - December 08, 2013 at 09:28 PM

LM

“ My deepest condolences to the family of Jim! He was always smiling and a happy man! The communities that he touched has lost a valuable man. My heart s heavy for this sad day! Lorraine Macholz

Lorraine Macholz - December 08, 2013 at 06:27 PM

LS

“ My deepest condolences go out to the Vacca family. I had the pleasure of working with Dr. Vacca for 6 years at LIU Brentwood. He would always great us in the main office with a warm smile and took the time to ask how I was doing. He will surely be missed.

Luisa Stellato - December 08, 2013 at 05:10 PM

MC

“ To the family of Dr James Vacca...our words cannot express how saddened we are for the loss of your husband & beloved grandfather...Our Deepest sympathy Mary Ann & James Carpenito

Mary Ann Carpenito - December 08, 2013 at 01:35 PM



“ *Love Everlasting Bouquet was purchased for the family of Dr. James S. Vacca.*



December 08, 2013 at 09:34 AM



“ *Lisa Traina lit a candle in memory of Dr. James S. Vacca*



Lisa Traina - December 08, 2013 at 07:55 AM



“ *To the family of Dr. Vacca.....Words cannot express how sorry I am for your loss. I knew Dr. Vacca since the days of CW Post and worked closely with him at the Westbury Middle School. He was the kindest man I have ever met. There were so many days I cried to him when I lost my father and he always knew the right things to say. He helped me through my grief and I will never forget his compassion and dedication. The world was a better place with Dr. Vacca. I will miss him greatly.*
Lisa Traina

Lisa Traina - December 08, 2013 at 07:54 AM

AL

“ Arnett and Nancy Leftenant purchased the Fruit Abounds for the family of Dr. James S. Vacca.



Arnett and Nancy Leftenant - December 08, 2013 at 07:47 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Dr. James S. Vacca.



December 07, 2013 at 05:11 PM