

Patti Lynn Johnson was born in Champaign, Ill. and grew up in Broadlands, Ill. Broadlands is a town of about 350 people in the vast farmland of Central Illinois. She excelled in academics and sports in her school years – cheerleading, playing volleyball and running track.

At the age of 17, and still in high school, Patti became pregnant. Despite this, she finished at the top of her class. She married, had two boys and was divorced four years later. Patti found herself a single mother with two young boys.

She dug in to establish the security she desired for her children while she worked several jobs and attended Parkland Community College in Champaign, Illinois. She earned her Associates in Science in 1984 and was a member of the Alpha Omega Honorary Scholastic Society and the Alpha Epsilon Delta Pre-med Honor Society at Parkland.

Following Parkland, she pursued her Bachelor of Science at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois, graduating in 1986 with a double major in zoology and chemistry. Patti met her future husband, Larry Johnson, while in school, and upon graduation, Patti and the boys moved to Birmingham, Ala., where she received a scholarship to pursue her master's in physical therapy at UAB.

Larry joined them a short time later. Patti and Larry were married in 1987 and a few years later added two more boys to their family.

Although she began the Master of Science Physical Therapy (MSPT) program with the class of 1988, Patti had to drop out due to the death of her father. She returned to the PT program two years later – a program she loved – and finished her MSPT in 1990.

Despite everything on her plate while in PT school, she ensured her boys had opportunities like Boy Scouts and sports. At one point, Patti served as a den mother for her oldest son's Cub Scouts, and he remembers how embarrassed he would get by her corny jokes, a trait she carried throughout her life, which contributed to making her the outstanding therapist she was. She used many of her corny jokes to cajole her clients into doing their exercises.

Following graduation, Patti practiced physical therapy in the Birmingham area in a hospital setting before accepting a position in 1993 as the Director of Physical Therapy with Northwest Medical Center in Winfield, Ala. A short time later, Patti pursued her passion working with disabled children and the elderly in a variety of settings.

In early 2021, Patti quit working as a practicing therapist when she became too ill to work. At this point, Patti and Larry were living in Green Valley, Ariz. On August 10, 2021, at the age of 63, Patti passed away in Tucson, Ariz., after a long battle with interstitial lung disease and complications from COVID-19.

Patti loved the UAB Department of Physical Therapy and cherished the relationships she developed with her fellow students and the faculty during her time in the program. She would be both humbled and honored to know her life story was now helping future UAB PT students.