



## Virginia L. Stephens

November 2, 1946 - March 3, 2024

It's A Wonderful Life! Virginia L. Stephens, daughter of the late Charles Leonard and Virginia Leonard, was born on November 2, 1946, in Norwalk Hospital in Norwalk, Connecticut. The Lord called upon Virginia on Sunday, March 3, 2024, to continue her divine duties as one of his angels. She is preceded in death by her father, Charles Leonard; mother, Virginia Leonard; grandson, Jordan Cruz; sister, Charlette Thomas; and daughter, Jennifer Cruz. Her contagious laugh and loving personality spread to anyone she interacted with. She enjoyed gatherings with close friends and family and taking yearly trips to Martha's Vineyard. She also enjoyed traveling internationally and learning about different cultures. Virginia graduated from New Canaan High School and later studied at Howard University. At Howard, she had the time of her life when she met her first husband. She later married and graduated from Pace University. After graduating from Pace University, she worked in accounting and finance for many years. She used her skills, business acumen, and attention to detail to help various companies develop, grow, and maintain profits. She chose to live intentionally and to work for organizations that she believed in. She was actively involved in the development of Women in Leadership at Southern New England Telephone, English Learners Support Services (ELSS) at Sacred Heart University and served on the Board of the Domestic Violence Crisis Center. Virginia achieved her childhood dream of becoming a teacher. She earned her Master of Business Administration from the University of Connecticut and began

working as the Multi-Cultural Student Advisor and a professor at Sacred Heart University. There, she shared her business and financial talents and became an influential role model for her students. Virginia was a dedicated and loving mother, grandmother, and wife. She provided support and inspiration to her daughters, encouraging them to value themselves, uphold their beliefs, and savor life. With encouragement, she motivated her grandson to be organized, plan his future, and explore the world through travel. She enjoyed cooking healthy and wholesome meals. One of her favorite saying was “every plate should have something green.” During her spiritual journey, she joined Bethel AME Church and proudly served as an usher for many years. She encouraged her daughters to enjoy life, do what they love, and live intentionally. Virginia leaves to cherish her memory her husband Lawrence Menskey, daughter Mrs. Ifeyinwa Stephens (Jemal Royster), grandson Mr. Brandon Cruz, niece Mrs. Tanya (James) Gilbert, Dr. Shirley (Barry) Carlos; Mr. Herbert (Ruth) Thomas, Jr.; Mrs. Paige (Daniel)Leavitt, cousin; Mr. Merl Mosley, and a host of family and friends.

Interment will be held on March 12th, 2024 at Lakeview Cemetery, New Canaan, CT. A memorial service will be held on Saturday April,6 2024 at 12:00 noon at Bethel AME Church 150 Fairfield Ave., Stamford, CT.

# Cemetery Details

**Lakeview Cemetery**

# Previous Events

## Memorial

APR 6. 12:00 PM (ET)

Bethel AME Church  
150 Fairfield Ave  
Stamford, CT 06902

# Tribute Wall

TS

“*Virginia, A Beautiful Woman with a Beautiful Spirit. Virginia always had a welcoming smile and a warm presence to make anyone feel the care that radiated off of her. Virginia also was so fun to be around for she loved to laugh and just allow goodness to be a part of her. Prayers go out to Virginia's family and loved ones.*

Tanya Stewart - April 30, 2024 at 12:15 PM

ER

“*GIGI! Our first neighbor in New Canaan. When my husband and young son Roman moved in behind Virginia and her husband Larry we were blessed with the best neighbors. The first night in our new home, Larry called and said “you left the back light on!” Fast forward to 2 years later when our daughter Kasia was born GIGI asked “how do you spell her name?” She had to make sure it was correct. She then made a sign and hung it in the window of her house, facing ours. It said “Roman + Kasia”. It was an announcement that Kasia had arrived and how joyful she and Larry were. That memory will always be with me. Her kindness. And love.*



Emily Renner - March 22, 2024 at 06:25 PM

DO

“*Virginia was such a positive presence at Sacred Heart, always smiling! She was a warm, kind, gracious and funny colleague and friend. I am so glad I knew her. Condolences to her family.*  
*Donna Tagliarino*

Donna - March 20, 2024 at 09:11 AM

PS

“Fairfield County mourns the loss of a passionate advocate for immigrant youth, Virginia Stephens, who played a pivotal role as a co-founder of English Learner Support Services (ELSS). Virginia's dedication to the cause and tireless efforts in ensuring the provision of English language services for middle and high school students have left an indelible mark on the community.

Since its establishment in 2016, ELSS has been a beacon of support for hundreds of English learners in Fairfield County schools, thanks in no small part to Virginia's unwavering commitment. Serving as the board secretary for several years, Virginia's organizational acumen and leadership were instrumental in shaping ELSS into the impactful nonprofit organization it is today.

Virginia's legacy at ELSS is marked by her deep understanding of the challenges faced by immigrant youth and her relentless pursuit to address those challenges. Her contributions have not only bridged language gaps but also opened doors of opportunity for countless students seeking to navigate the complexities of education in a new country.

Virginia's compassion and dedication to the most vulnerable English learners in Fairfield County schools set a standard of service that will be remembered for years to come. ELSS board members and staff express their profound appreciation for Virginia's invaluable contributions, and her absence will be keenly felt by all those who benefited from her tireless advocacy.

As we bid farewell to Virginia, let us remember and celebrate the life of a remarkable individual whose impact on ELSS and the broader community will be dearly missed.

Thank you, Virginia.

Peter Shaker

ELSS Executive Director

---

**Peter Shaker** - March 19, 2024 at 12:10 PM

MC

“ *Mardi Crane lit a candle in memory of Virginia L. Stephens*



---

**Mardi Crane** - March 11, 2024 at 11:20 PM