



Nancy Bergquist, Rockland's first female paramedic, remembered as 'gold standard'

SLOATSBURG — Nancy Bergquist, a Sloatsburg resident raised in Pearl River, died Thursday of liver cancer at Northern Westchester Hospital. She was 50.

Bergquist was born in New York City but became a product of Rockland's Catholic schools, including St. Margaret's School, after her family moved to Pearl River in 1960. She attended Rockland Community College, earning an associate degree in occupational therapy, and later would earn a degree in paramedicine, enabling her to begin what her brother Michael Bergquist described as "her calling."

Though she had volunteered for years as an emergency medical technician, Nancy Bergquist began her career as a paramedic in 1986, becoming the county's first female paramedic, said Ray Florida, executive director of Rockland Paramedic Services.

Michael Bergquist said he was not surprised by his sister's career path.

"When we were kids, she used to take care of little animals. She used to bandage me up. We were always playing doctor," he said. "She was a very strong woman. She's the backbone, the strength for the whole family."

Michael Bergquist said the strength inherent in his sister pushed her to work beyond the parameters of her job in order to help as many people as she could.

"She worked 80 hours a week," he said. "She never really went on vacation. She just worked all the time. It wasn't like a job for her, it was a calling."

Nancy Bergquist won several awards in her career, and most recently was recognized as winner of the 2009 Advanced Life Support Provider of the Year Award from the Rockland County EMS and Hudson Valley Regional Emergency Services Council.

Michael Bergquist said his sister was studying to be a nurse when she died.

When not working or studying, Nancy Bergquist often could be found assisting her fellow paramedics and working with younger crew members to improve their skills.

Florida said that during her career, she saved countless lives and was able to be there for people at their most critical moments.

"She's actually the gold standard for paramedics. It's going to be a tough loss for the people of Rockland County because she was such an expert in her field," Florida said. "The intrinsic value of knowing that she made a difference in people's lives, that's what really kept her going. We're going to miss her a lot."

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If you go

Visitation for Nancy Bergquist will be from 2 to 4 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. today at Assumma-Shankey Funeral Home at 34 W. Summit St. in Pearl River. A funeral Mass is set for 11 a.m. Monday at St. Margaret's Church on West Central Avenue.

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