

# Commentary: Remembering June Forbes

By **Anya Mccann**



June Forbes passed away Jan. 8. Courtesy photo

*“Recovery is something to do, something to care about, something to hope for.”*

“June Forbes was a leader in the true sense of the word. She set an example for others by her selfless commitment to the cause, long hours of volunteer work, and by her tenacity in fighting for the rights of the mentally ill,” according to Yolo County Supervisor Jim Provenza, District 4.

June Forbes died Jan. 8, 2019, from a stroke at Sutter Medical Center in Sacramento. June was 77 and was a resident of Davis for the past 31 years. She was born June 1, 1941, in Oakland to Evelyn Dice Forbes and John Perry Forbes.

She is survived by her husband, Bill Schuldt, her school sweetheart, the love of her life, and partner in everything; her treasured son, Michael Dean Minix; sisters Joanna Louise Roberts and Elise Forbes-Seeley; and brother, John David Forbes.

A tour de force in mental health activism, she was a fierce, dedicated, passionate advocate, driving forward change in services and supporting those living with mental illness and those who cared about them.

Assemblywoman Cecilia Aguiar-Curry said, “June Forbes’ death is not just a tragic blow to her family and friends but to all of Yolo County. June spent decades in our community working on behalf of those suffering with mental illness, from ensuring access to treatment to fighting against stigma and prejudice.”

June’s advocacy began more than 35 years ago, when her son, Michael, found sanctuary at Pine Tree Gardens, a residential supportive services home in Davis for adults living with serious mental illness. She joined the local chapter of Mental Health America, which evolved into National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Yolo County.

Thus began her mission to improve lives and her dedication to the NAMI Yolo chapter, ushering in its stigma-shattering nationwide programming for local residents and their loved ones, offered at no cost to participants.

June held an MBA in management and had a thriving career in finance for a variety of companies, which was excellent training for holding nearly every position on the NAMI Yolo board.

She doggedly sought and trained volunteers for education and support programs that served thousands — co-facilitating a Family Support Group just weeks ago. There was a special place in her heart for Pine Tree Gardens, including support for facility upgrades.

At Homestead Independent Living Co-op, she led monthly and holiday meals that also included art, outings and exercise. Cooking the Christmas ham dinner was her last contribution before her death.

“June was like a classy Mrs. Claus, kind and grandmotherly — she lit up the room like a Christmas tree as she entered,” notes Cass Sylvia, retired Yolo County public guardian/conservator. “Then she articulately got down to business and got her way.”

Her most recent outreach included expanding In Our Own Voice, a program that dispels myths and misunderstanding by featuring the stories of people who live in recovery from serious mental illness. She also organized NAMI Yolo presentations of Crisis Intervention Team Training for law enforcement, and launched Ending the Silence to provide information to students and educators.

She organized annual outreach like Mental Illness Awareness Week activities, the Interfaith Service of Prayer for Understanding & Recovery, and Rally to Shine a Light on Recovery.

June was appointed more than a decade ago by Yolo County supervisors to the Local Mental Health Board to advise on public mental health and substance abuse needs and services. June advocated for local housing options, economic opportunities, expansion of programs like mental health courts, and increased access to best-practices treatment, support and research. She also sought to decriminalize mental illness.

“She was instrumental in moving the county to improve treatment for the mentally ill by our criminal justice system and provide better services for those suffering a crisis or needing urgent assistance,” Provenza said. “June was a shining light in our community. I am honored to have been her friend. We will miss her.”

Yolo County Supervisor Don Saylor agreed and added, “She was equally at home making sandwiches for a gathering, testifying at a government meeting, talking with mental health consumers, organizing a walk or a ceremony, or deciding on paint colors for a residential facility.

“June made a positive difference in the lives of the people of Yolo County. I will miss the twinkle in her eye when good things were happening and the spark in her voice when she thought we could do better.”

James Glica-Hernandez, chairman of the Yolo County Local Mental Health Board, observed, “Most people saw June as an advocate for mental health, but when you looked at her work and the intention behind her work, it was more like a mother lion protecting her cubs.

“It was like she was compelled to make a difference in their lives, it is what made her so compelling to so many. She was a vital force on our board.”

In 2017, June’s dream became a reality: securing three years of funding through the Transition Aged Youth Speakers Bureau & Peer and Family Led Support Services grant from the Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency. NAMI Yolo opened an office in Woodland and hired its first staff.

Davis City Councilman Lucas Frerichs noted that “June Forbes was one of the most persistent advocates I’ve ever worked with; she tirelessly pursued and fought for adequate funding resources and programs for those folks in our community who needed a champion.”

June will be remembered at a memorial service beginning at 3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 26, at the Episcopal Church of St. Martin, 640 Hawthorn Lane in Davis. A reception will follow. The Rev. Dr. Pamela Dolan will officiate.

June's remains, along with generations of the Forbes family, reside at Chapel of the Chimes in Oakland.

In lieu of flowers, her survivors ask the community to continue her stewardship by contributing to the vision she fought so hard to achieve. Contributions to the June Forbes Memorial Fund for Understanding and Recovery from Mental Illness may be made online at [www.namiyolo.org](http://www.namiyolo.org) or mailed to P.O. Box 447, Davis, CA 95617. Supporters also are invited to attend the annual Pat Williams Dinner on Thursday, Feb. 21.

— *Anya McCann is a Davis resident and mental health advocate.*