

Mary Margaret Cohorst  
1951-2020

Mary Margaret Cohorst, age 69, of Portland, OR, formerly of Peshtigo, WI, passed away Wednesday, February 19, 2020, while vacationing in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She was born January 7, 1951 in Menominee, MI, daughter of the late Joseph A. and Lillian M. (Powers) Cohorst.

Mary was a graduate of Peshtigo High School, Class of 1969. During her high school years, she was a member of the high school band and choir. She continued her education at University of Wisconsin - Steven's Point, where she earned her bachelor's degree in History.

After earning her degree, Mary began her long and illustrious career with the Department of Labor's (DOL) Job Corps (JC) Program. Through JC, Mary worked with disadvantaged youth throughout the nation. She dedicated 44 years of her life to improving the lives of the youth of our country. Because of Mary's intelligence, capabilities, leadership ability and excellent communication skills, she moved up quickly through the program. Her career with JC started in 1974 as a VISTA volunteer. This position took her to the Tongue Point Job Corps Center (JCC) in Astoria, Oregon where she worked as a residential advisor and later a counselor. In the late 1970's she was promoted to Manager of a JC program in Seattle that provided work experience and college opportunities to JC youth in the Northwest. In 1981 she was selected to help start up the Cascades JC Center in Sedro Woolley, Washington in the capacity of Residential Living Manager, a position she held for a couple of years. Later she returned to Tongue Point JCC as its Deputy Director. In the late 1980's Mary moved to Portland, Oregon to assume the Center Director position at the Springdale JC in Troutdale, Oregon. During her tenure at Springdale JCC, she was instrumental in establishing the Partners in Vocational Training (PIVOT), a program that served parenting mothers in the City of Portland. In the Center Director capacity, she worked extensively with the Portland and surrounding communities to ensure that the Center and PIVOT were a valuable resource to communities they served. Mary was an extremely effective Center Director. Under her leadership, the Springdale Center was ranked among the top centers in the nation, an indicator of the positive outcomes in training and placing the participants she was responsible for.

In 1999, Mary was hired by Chugach Alaska Corporation. She began her almost 19-year career with Chugach as the Director of JC Operations. Later she was promoted to be the President of Chugach Education Services, Inc. Mary moved to the executive leadership team of Chugach Government Solutions, LLC. as the Vice-president of Education and Training and the General Manager of Chugach Technical Educational Solutions, LLC. with two other subsidiary companies under her leadership. As Chugach grew, friendships and life-long bonds did as well. Every member of the Chugach family who knew Mary loved Mary and enjoyed her company. Mary had a special bond with her two teammates, Claire McMillan and Bobbie Irvin. To know her was to love her and to work with her was to strive every day to be as wise and committed as she was at work and leisure. There were many miles traveled and many laughs laughed and at the end of the day, as you began to wind down, you simply yearned for more time with Mary.

Mary represented JC in many capacities, but one of her great accomplishments was the many years she served on the Operator's Advisory Committee of the National Job Corps Association (NJCA). Mary commanded the room and had a voice that was heard and respected by all. If something wasn't right, she would say so, if something wasn't wrong she would say so as well. As a member of the NJCA she worked alongside other JC operators to maintain visibility of the program, and to keep Congress informed of the successes of our JC participants and needs for funding to maintain an effective program. Mary had a special gift. She could walk onto a Job JCC and meet and greet staff and students, and the next day, remember their names.

Mary's communication skills were excellent. The corporations she worked for to include RCA Service Company, General Electric and Management and Training Corporation, and Chugach Alaska Corporation, frequently used her talents to write proposals and develop community linkages. In the early 1980's, she was detailed to work with the Job Corps Regional Office in Seattle for a 6-month period. Mary participated in several workgroups and task forces for the DOL JC Program that had nationwide impact on the youth served by JC, including the Residential Living Task Force the Social Skills Training Program which was implemented system wide. Mary retired from Chugach in 2018. Throughout her entire career, she touched many lives and cared for many people.

Mary had a passion for travel and did so extensively throughout the world. She visited 59 countries and every continent except Australia. Many friends joined her on her excursions. She always took beautiful pictures and had fascinating stories to tell of her travels. Her many friends she made joined her on her excursions. She enjoyed her daily run to Starbucks for her Americano "with room." Her zest for life and adventure was a true inspiration.

Mary is survived by her siblings: Susan Wright, Dennis (Beth) Cohorst and Laurie (Steve) Albers; and nieces and nephews: Dennis (Trina) Cohorst, Daniel (Amanda) Cohorst, Diana (Nyal) Bartch, Nick Wright and Leon Albers. She is further survived by great-nieces and nephews: Sebastian, Autumn, Aliyah, Ainsley, Abigail, Garrett and Clara.

She was preceded in death by her parents and sister, Patty Jo Cohorst.

A celebration of Mary's life will be held at a later date in Green Bay and in Portland.

In lieu of flowers, memorials directed to a charity of your choice in Mary's name are appreciated. In the near future, CGS will announce plans to honor Mary's tenure and her profound impact on our Chugach family.

Mary's family would like to thank the many friends that joined Mary on all of her travels and adventures, especially Barb.