R.I.P. Nita Pippins, a Mother to Many Dealing With AIDS

She moved to New York in 1987 to care for a dying son. Read a touching 2007 tribute by a former POZ staffer.

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In 1987, Nita Pippins, then a retired nurse in Florida, moved to New York City to care for her only child, a son dying of AIDS-related illness. She remained in Manhattan and devoted herself to providing care and guidance for others in the same situation. She died on Mother's Day, May 10, 2020, at Amsterdam Nursing Home in Manhattan, reports The New York Times. She was 93 and died of complications of the novel coronavirus, which causes COVID-19.

Her son, Nick, died at age 35, three years after she arrived. He was an actor who filmed many commercials and who in 1987 founded the People With AIDS Theater Workshop, made up only of actors who had AIDS. He was also a former partner of the late Dennis Daniels, who penned a touching tribute to Nita Pippins in May 2007 titled "The Mother of Us All." He was a former comptroller for the parent company of POZ.

When she arrived in Manhattan, Pippins hated the city and was ashamed of her son's sexuality. But her time with him and his circle of friends transformed her. Daniels reports that after she grieved his death, Nita became instrumental in founding the charity Miracle House, five three-bedroom apartments in Manhattan that offered a free place to stay for caregivers and families arriving in the city to attend to loved ones who had AIDS. (Before it closed in 2014, Miracle House expanded to offer services for people staying in Manhattan for medical treatments and appointments not related to AIDS.)

Local news station NY1 once profiled Pippins as a New Yorker of the Week. You can watch that segment at the top of this article.

Pippins's hospitality to guests of Miracle House included a free breakfast program that she started. She would meet them at a Midtown diner so they wouldn't feel so alone in the city. She related to many of them who were not only dealing with a child's AIDS diagnoses but also, in many cases, learning of their sexual orientation at the same time.

And for many of the adult children with AIDS, Pippins became a surrogate mother.

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