



Vic Gardner Memorial Scholarship

Written by: Debra S.B. Gardner (wife), Nick B. Gardner and Drew Z. Gardner (sons) April 9, 2016

Vic Gardner was my soulmate for 34 years. In 2006, he went home to our Lord, but not before making a profound impact on the students in the Westfield Public School system. It is in celebration of his life that my sons and I have created this endowment to continue to help future physical education teachers and health care providers fund their education in the same way Citizens' Scholarship Foundation of Westfield helped Vic.

Vic was born and raised in Westfield and spent many hours on the playgrounds and ballfields. He loved sports and was a member of the Westfield High School baseball team that won the State Championship in 1967. Upon graduation from Westfield High, he entered Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont as a physical education major/ biology minor and an ROTC cadet. Soccer became his new love and he had a wonderful college soccer career, winning the Vermont State Championship in 1968 and playing in Europe in 1969, being selected for the Vermont All State Team in '69 and '70, and being voted MVP his senior year.

Upon graduating in '71, Vic entered military life in the Army Medical Corp at Ft. Campbell, KY with his new wife, Deb, and became the player/coach of the Ft. Campbell Eagles. We spent many hours on the road up and down the Mississippi River Valley. The Eagles were undefeated in '72 and '73, the champions of the Dixie Amateur Soccer League. It was a great way to spend his 2 year active duty commitment, along with riding horses in the beautiful Tennessee countryside and working as a supervisor in the Ft. Campbell military hospital.

We returned to Massachusetts the spring of 1974, and Vic started his career as a physical education teacher in Westfield and finished his military commitment in the Army National Guards in 1978 leaving as a Captain. In 1979 our first son, Nicholas, was born and in 1982, our second son, Drew came into the world. He received a Master's degree in Business from AIC in 1983, thinking that he might want to change careers and making sure that he had the opportunity. Vic went on to play in adult soccer leagues, become a FIFA soccer referee and coached both of his sons in Little League baseball and soccer until high school.

Vic spent many wonderful hours skiing at Blandford Ski Area with his family and friends as well as in the North Country, cross country skiing locally, riding our horses, swimming in area lakes and ponds, camping and canoeing on the Saco River, BMX racing throughout New England,

gardening and landscaping, hiking, fishing in local rivers, ice fishing in the Berkshires, and vacationing at special beaches and parks on the East Coast. We both loved singing in the choir at The Church of the Atonement, as well. Watching both sons grow in soccer and move on to lacrosse was the highlight of our sons' high school years for us.

Vic taught physical education in Westfield for 32 years, starting at South Middle School, moving to the former Smith Avenue School and finally taking an elementary level position at Juniper Park. His students adored him and their parents were by his side in any activity which he supported or directed. He loved his position more than any teacher I've known. He wanted his students to enjoy the gym and outdoors and encouraged them to make it part of their lives forever. He had learned to serve during his college years and he spent his whole life serving in quiet ways that fit his gentle, unassuming personality, whether it was helping the PTA, his church, his mother-in-law, his neighbors, his friends, or his family. Vic was always there!

Upon receiving this scholarship, may you discover the same kind of love and compassion Vic had for teaching and for the sharing of positive health for our children, as well as for life itself, in your own journey through higher education. Congratulations.