

**Kenneth A. Johnson**

Johnson, Kenneth A. SCHENECTADY Ken Johnson died on February 2, 2015, after a long illness. Born on November 7, 1927, to Alex and Emma (Foehl) Johnson, Ken grew up in Schenectady, and graduated from Nott Terrace High School in 1945. While at Nott Terrace, Ken's long career in sports began. He lettered in football, baseball, basketball, and track before heading to Syracuse University, where he earned three letters in baseball before graduating with a degree in physical education in 1951. After graduating from high school, he was drafted into the U.S. Army in March 1946, and was honorably discharged in May 1947, when the Army downsized after the end of [World War II](#). He then enrolled at Syracuse, and when he finished there, he was drafted by the Brooklyn Dodgers and assigned to the Minor League team in Hazard, Ky. He is listed in Bill James Almanac of Baseball Records for his achievements during the 1952 season at Hazard when he hit .299, drew 197 walks, and stole 42 bases in 119 games. His ratio of walks per games remains among the highest in baseball history. After two years in Hazard, he was optioned to the Detroit Tigers organization, but he decided to return to Schenectady and pursue a career as a teacher. He started officiating basketball games in 1954 (and continued to do so until 2004, an amazing 50 consecutive years), and was hired in 1957 to teach physical education in the Schenectady city schools. A creative teacher, he used games and contests to teach his students the value of competition and sportsmanship, while showing them how to stay physically fit. In 1971 he became the coordinator for physical education for grades K-6; in 1974 his leadership was expanded to K-8; and in 1979, he was named citywide chair for K-12. He maintained this position until his retirement in 1989. Throughout his teaching career, Ken coached a number of teams in a number of different sports. He coached freshman basketball at Niskayuna High School, and in 1956-57 his team went 17-1; he was then hired as the varsity basketball coach at St. Columba High School in Schenectady where he won two New York State Small Catholic School State Championships. He was manager of the KRAL A.C. baseball team for seven years and won three Two-light League championships. He coached JV football under Walt Pryzbylo at Linton; was assistant football coach under Doug Erickson at Draper High School from 1960 - 1966; coached JV football at Mont Pleasant from 1967-1973; coached the JV basketball team at Mont Pleasant from 1966-1975; coached the Draper High School track and field team from 1960-1975 (in 1972 he opened up participation to girls prior to the passage of Title IX); coached the Schenectady Babe Ruth team from 1972-1978; and coached the Schenectady Connie Mack team from 1972-1978. A strong believer in the teacher union movement, Ken served on negotiating teams for the Schenectady Federation of Teachers for over 25 years, and, in the aftermath of the strike of 1975, he became one of the Schenectady Twelve, a dozen teachers who were unfairly jailed after the strike was settled. He was an avid bowler and golfer, though he never felt he mastered either game. He loved the camaraderie of sports and never tired of teaching or coaching any sport. He was honored for his lifelong dedication to baseball in Schenectady with his induction into the Schenectady Baseball Hall of Fame in 1989. This was followed in 1996 by his induction into the Schenectady City School District Lifetime Achievement Hall of Fame for his contributions to sports and education. He is survived by his loving wife of 59 years, Janet (Holland); his four children, Cheryl Della Sala (Tom) of Schenectady, Ken Johnson (LeAnn) from Severna Park, Md., Laure LeBlanc (Jeff) of East Greenwich, R.I. and Jerry Johnson (Nancy) of Macungie, Pa.; and nine grandchildren, Adam and Kaytrin Della Sala, Mark and Stephen Johnson, Canaan and Skylar LeBlanc, and Alex, Kelsey, and Ben Johnson. Calling hours will be from 4 to 7 p.m., at Daly Funeral Home on Friday, February 6, 2015. A memorial service will be held on Saturday at 11 a.m., at the funeral home. Interment will be in Vale Cemetery in Schenectady. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made in Ken's name to the Kenneth A. Johnson Scholarship Fund, Schenectady City School District, 108 Education Drive, Schenectady, NY 12303, or to Community Hospice, 1411 Union St., Schenectady, NY 12309.

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**Published in Albany Times Union from Feb. 4 to Feb. 5, 2015**