

Dorothy “Dottie” Simpson Dorion ‘52

Dottie’s mother, Doris Simpson, taught Home Economics at Bay Shore High School and part of her instruction as a teacher and mother included innovation, perseverance and compassion. Mrs. Simpson taught boys to cook, instructed co-ed classes in Family Living and included students who were considered “challenged” in her classes.

Dottie graduated from Bay Shore in 1952, and in 1957 graduated with honors from Columbia University School of Nursing. She married George Dorion, PhD. (Chemistry / Williams College and Yale University) in 1957. Ten years later Dottie graduated from Southern Connecticut University with an M.S. in Special Education. She and George have four children and three grandchildren.

INNOVATION is a “red flag” for Dottie. When the idea of Hospice was relatively unknown, she realized there had to be a better way to experience the final days of life: In comfort surrounded by family and friends. She joined other Florida pioneers in late 1979 to develop the concept, became a lobbyist for the cause and worked as first Director of Hospice of Northeast Florida.

As was the norm in the 1950’s, Dottie did not have sports opportunities afforded boys and that led to her advocacy of Title IX. Dottie was a founder and first woman President of The Osprey Athletic Club at The University of North Florida and is inducted to their Sports Hall of Fame. The Dottie Dorion Fitness Center at UNF is named in her honor and serves over 800 students a day. She has established athletic scholarships at The University and works out at The DDFC on a regular basis.

PERSEVERANCE is Dottie’s middle name. Always an athlete, Dottie has competed in a variety of sports. At Bay Shore she ran around in her maroon bloomers and excelled at field hockey and other team sports. Her years in tennis were remarkable thanks to the Van Nostrands.

She learned to swim in order to compete in the Ironman Triathlon in Hawaii (2.4 mile ocean swim, 112 mile bike, and 26.2 mile run). Dottie completed that Triathlon three times. She started triathlon in her 40's and has completed over 250 races, a Swim around Key West, and was a Torch Bearer for the 1996 Olympics. Along the way she served as Chairperson for The International Triathlon Union Women's Committee and spearheaded the program, "Adopt-a-Triathlete" which aided aspiring triathletes in Third World countries.

COMPASSION: At a major homeless center for women and families in Jacksonville, Dottie maintains a fitness program to encourage exercise and nutrition education. She was presented a Lifetime Achievement Award for her work there. She directed a school for children with learning disabilities and organized summer camps to meet their unique needs. In 2003 she and a retired physician co-founded Volunteers in Medicine Jacksonville – a free medical clinic for the working uninsured. The clinic now has 500 patient visits a month. Dottie qualifies new patients and hears many tragic and true tales of lack of medical care. VIM provides "Assurance for the Uninsured". Additionally, Dottie has endowed scholarships for aspiring nurses at several colleges.

Dottie continues to work professionally, serves on a variety of Boards, enjoys public speaking, paints and schedules time to work out every day. She and George maintain their primary residence in Jacksonville, Florida, but spend their summers in Norwich, Vermont, and travel extensively. Dottie thanks her Mom, Husband, Family, Teachers and Friends for the gifts they shared with her so she could use those gifts to benefit others. She always remembers that "It is in giving that we receive joy."