

*WITS Remembers Co-Founder
Joanne Hammerman Alter
July 3, 1927 - November 9, 2008*



It is with great sadness that WITS remembers one of the most influential individuals in our organization's history, our co-founder Joanne Alter. For decades, Joanne served as an advocate of equal education opportunities, giving a powerful voice to those without one. She was a remarkable, strong-willed woman who always pushed boundaries; never taking no for an answer.

When Cabrini Green was at its very worst and no one would even drive within a five mile radius of its gang infested neighborhoods, Joanne walked right into its heart and asked the principal of Byrd School how she and her dear friend, Marion Stone, could help. While she may have started out with the intention of helping one classroom, Joanne's determined spirit quickly spread across Chicago.

In the past seventeen years, WITS has served thousands of Chicago Public School students. Joanne's leadership has been instrumental in our continuing success, her passion for our mission has been inspiring, and her charisma has made working for this organization a true privilege.

Her legacy will live on through the lives of those she has touched so dearly. Teachers, principals, students, staff and volunteers who have had the fortune of knowing and working with Joanne will forever remember her compassion and dedication to the children of Chicago. We will continue to honor her spirit in the work we do and the lives we touch.

While WITS is only one of the many amazing accomplishments in Joanne's life; to us, it is the most precious. Her efforts for WITS and our students have perhaps left us with one of the most valuable lesson of all - the unyielding importance of education as a key to leveling the playing field for all our children. Thus, it is with great sadness that we remember and honor Joanne Alter, a woman whose unprecedented efforts in education will forever leave footprints in our hearts.