Friday July 14th, 2017

It’s been quite a celebration. A painfully sad occasion, but nevertheless, a celebration of a life well lived.

Our colleague and friend Diane Adams passed away on June 21, 2017 at the age of 37. The common turn of phrase is that “she lost the battle with cancer”, but the way I see it, she won that battle, fair and square. She never let the disease take away her radiant positive energy, or her fierce optimism. She never let the disease define who she is and what she can achieve.

Today we came together in the Marine Sciences Alampi room to remember all the things that did define her. We heard from colleagues, students, her PhD advisor, and from her mom Aileen. We learned about her unmatched skills to squeeze DNA out of impossibly small samples, and that pipette karaoke is a thing. We were reminded how her generosity left no room for humility by the sometimes reluctant recipient - resistance is futile. We saw her drive off in her bright red 1959 Triumph. Not so much into the sunset, but to a countryside pub to enjoy lunch with her colleagues and fellow vintage car enthusiasts Rob and Costa. We got to meet her family and her oldest friend from high school. And we were reminded that we are a family.

Diane was an amazing mentor. In her four years here at DMCS 12 undergrads passed through [her lab](https://adams.marine.rutgers.edu), and she advised two graduate students and two postdocs. Her former student Chris Diliberto recounted how his experience in Diane’s lab was truly transformative for his professional and personal development. He just finished his second year at medical school, and his account left no doubt in our mind that her legacy will be carried forward through her students and postdocs.

In life and in her academic career, defeat was a concept Diane was not familiar with. Her expertise was only ever a starting point and not a perimeter for what she would tackle in her research. Her work touched on climate change, breast cancer, international marine conservation and policy, and how life gets re-started after things blow up catastrophically three miles under the sea. Our colleague Tali Mass dropped her snorkel and plankton net to fly in from Hawaii and tell us about the [research she and Diane are conducting there](https://marine.rutgers.edu/featured-research/a-white-polka-dot-coral-reef/) on coral bleaching. Just in the last few weeks the team has been awarded two new research awards to continue the work.

She was an advocate and great role model for women in science. This extended from savvy advice how to dump a boyfriend to how to have a successful and very active career in science while raising a young family. She wrote an autobiographical guide on how to have your cake and eat it in the journal [Oceanography](http://www.tos.org/oceanography/assets/docs/27-4_supp_bios.pdf). At Rutgers she participated in the Connection Network Mentoring Program to pass on her wisdom beyond our department.

Diane, you have left an indelible mark on this department and this university. You leave behind a legacy of creative cutting-edge research and a remarkable group of students and postdocs. I just wish your office door was still open and I could stop by for a chat about… you know… nothing in particular, just to soak up some of your infectious good vibes.

Missing you,

Silke

The department plans to honor her legacy by establishing a graduate fellowship in her name. We also plan to initiate an award in her name each year for the best independent undergrad research project. To donate, go to the [link](https://goo.gl/Du2ayL) (<https://goo.gl/Du2ayL>) and specify “Diane Poehls Adams Graduate Student Support in Marine and Coastal Sciences Endowed Fund" as the fund. Please make sure you both specify this fund and identify Diane as the honoree so that these funds are directed toward their intended purpose.

