

Friends mourn Lynn Bretz, former voice of KU

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Friends and colleagues remembered Lynn Bretz on Monday as a consummate professional who worked hard to tell Kansas University's story.

Bretz, 62, died on Sunday after an 18-month battle with cancer.

She had worked in KU's office of University Relations, becoming its director in 2002 before being named as KU's director of University Communications in 2006.

"Lynn was awesome," said Tom Hutton, a former director of University Relations at KU from 1990 to 1999.

He said he continued to follow Bretz's career as she moved up the ranks and gained more responsibility, and he kept up with her as she fought cancer in recent months.

"She was very caring, compassionate," Hutton said. "But when she was business, she was business. She was very much a professional and certainly cared about the university."

Before joining the staff at KU, Bretz worked as a journalist, with jobs at Commodity News Services in Leawood and as the arts editor for the Lawrence Journal-World in the early 1980s. She was inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame at KU in 2011.

"Lynn Bretz loved this university and all of the people who call it home. She was a tireless advocate for KU, always working to make our university a better place," KU Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little said in a written statement. "And from her experience as a reporter, Lynn valued the role the media plays in covering a public institution. Lynn was a trusted adviser, dedicated mentor and caring friend to so many, and I offer my deepest sympathies to her family and friends."

Jane Blocher, executive director of the Douglas County Chapter of the American Red Cross, recalled how Bretz was "a vessel of knowledge and wisdom" for a group of her fellow public information officers in Douglas County.

"I think she personified commitment to her profession," Blocher said. "She worked around the clock, seven days a week. But I never heard her complain."

Blocher said Bretz's indefatigable spirit continued into her fight against cancer.

"I think she inspired everybody around her on how to pick up the pieces after an unspeakable tragedy and move forward," she said.

Bretz was preceded in death by her partner of 30 years, Janet Hamburg, a KU professor of dance, and her parents.

A memorial celebration of her life is scheduled for 11 a.m. Friday at Plymouth Congregational Church, 925 Vt. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the KU Endowment Association in support of the Janet Hamburg Visiting Artist Series.
