

School volunteer, mentor dies at 56



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James Michael "Mike" Chittom: A fellow Rotarian said: "When Mike walked in the door (of Clinton Elementary School), you could hear kids calling, 'Hi, Mr. Chittom,' as they flocked to him. He was like the Pied Piper."

[By Tulsa World Staff Reports](#)

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James Michael "Mike" Chittom, a Rotarian and a mentor to the students at Celia Clinton Elementary School, died Friday. He was 56.

A memorial service is scheduled for 11 a.m. Thursday at the First United Methodist Church under the direction of Moore's Southlawn Funeral Home.

Chittom was born Sept. 27, 1951, in Fort Jackson, S.C., to June (Kimmel) and Charles Chittom.

He graduated in 1969 from Hale High School in Tulsa and received a business degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1976.

Chittom married Carrie Marston on June 13, 1992.

He was a self-employed stock trader and investor.

A dedicated Rotarian since 1997, Chittom volunteered at Celia Clinton Elementary School, the Rotary Club of Tulsa's partner in the Adopt-a-School program.

The program involves about 30 Rotarians who regularly mentor individual students in reading and other subjects or who interact with a class.

Chittom worked with an entire class at a time, taking the students to the library or cafeteria, where he read to them or worked with them on what they were learning in class.

For the past nine years, he was chairman of the Celia Clinton Adopt-A-School Committee.

He oversaw a clothing drive that produced so many donations of coats and clothing that a trailer was needed to contain them all.

Chittom wrote in a December 2007 Rotary Club newsletter: "I always remember what the founder of Express Personnel said when asked if he was rich. He said, 'You are only as rich as the last person you helped.' All of us who work at Celia Clinton Elementary are trying to be rich."

Chittom visited the school almost daily.

He also helped start a canned food drive, which was designed to give healthy foods to children who don't have much to eat or who don't eat well on weekends.

"He was the best man I ever knew," said Terri Heritage, a fellow Rotarian and co-chairwoman of the Adopt-A-School committee.

"When Mike walked in the door (of the school), you could hear kids calling, 'Hi, Mr. Chittom,' as they flocked to him. He was like the Pied Piper."

Chittom was the most recent recipient of the Rotary Club's highest honor, the James G. Saied Service Above Self and Then Some Award, for his work at the school.

"Mike was a great Rotarian and a giant among community leaders," said Tim Colwell, president of the Rotary Club of Tulsa.

"We all are going to miss his infectious laughter, his passion for kids and his ability to make us cry with stories of Celia Clinton students."

Chittom also played the banjo in Steve Ham's Jambalaya Jass Band.

He is survived by his wife, Carrie Chittom; three stepdaughters, Laura Goss of Jenks, Sarah Frye of Houston and Katie Lefler of Tulsa; his parents, Charles and June Chittom of Tulsa; a sister, Janice Brasher of Tulsa; and three grandchildren.

Friends are making memorial contributions to the Tulsa Rotary Community Fund. A scholarship fund for Celia Clinton students is being established in Chittom's name.

