

*Service of  
Celebration*



*John DeSantis*

Monday, January 10, 2022

11:00am

# John DeSantis

John DeSantis, the owner of the Pittsburgh Home & Garden Show, a vocal community activist and a longtime preservationist, has died. He was 69.

Mr. DeSantis' death was confirmed by his adopted son, Mark Moore, who said his father died Saturday. Mr. Moore said his father died of brain cancer.

Mr. DeSantis' career began in the family business, running Gateway Florist in Downtown. At 26, he became president of the Allied Florists of Western Pennsylvania and brought ideas he learned helping run a neighborhood festival on the North Side.

He persuaded his group to partner with the Builders Association of Metropolitan Pittsburgh and form the Pittsburgh Home & Garden Show, signing a lease as the David L. Lawrence Convention Center's first tenant at the ground-breaking ceremony. The Downtown center was a year late, but when it opened with the first home show in 1982, some 32,000 visitors came for 84 exhibitors in 131 booths.

The show was a success to the public and media, but not to the builders and florists, who lost \$30,000 because they had underestimated the labor costs. The builders walked away, and the florists fired the man they had hired to run the show.

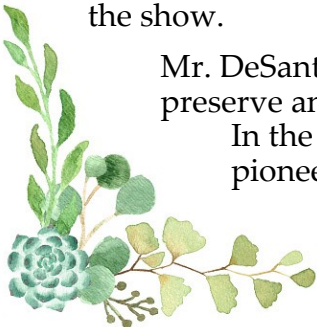
Mr. DeSantis volunteered to run it without pay. So he did, and the next year the show grew bigger, but lost about twice as much money.

Mr. DeSantis couldn't persuade his peers to hang on, and so he bought the show by paying the debt of \$98,000.

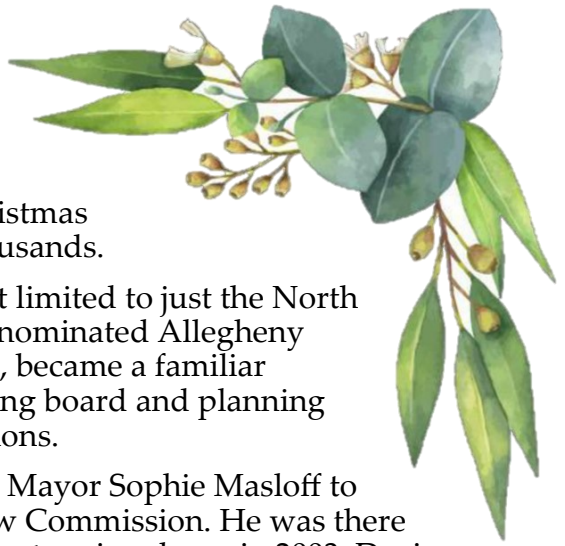
The third year, the show broke even. By the late 1980s, he was out of the floral business and was doing well running the show.

Mr. DeSantis' was also known for the work he did to preserve and revitalize his North Side neighborhood.

In the 1970s and '80s, Mr. DeSantis was among the pioneers who helped transform the deteriorating Allegheny West section of the North Side and helped return the neighborhood to its late-19th-century status as a desirable place to live.



His Allegheny West mansion facing Brighton Road was a staple on house tours and the last stop on the Old Allegheny Victorian Christmas House Tour, which drew thousands.



His preservation work wasn't limited to just the North Side. Mr. DeSantis, who had nominated Allegheny West as a city historic district, became a familiar figure at meetings of the zoning board and planning and historic review commissions.

In 1990, he was appointed by Mayor Sophie Masloff to lead the city's Historic Review Commission. He was there for more than a decade before stepping down in 2003. During his tenure, he was sometimes a controversial figure, his arguments based on a philosophy that preservation was a necessary tool for revitalization.

During Mr. DeSantis' tenure, the number of city-designated historic districts grew from five — Market Square, Manchester, Mexican War Streets, Penn Liberty, and Schenley Farms — to 12, with the addition of Allegheny West, East Carson Street, Oakland Civic Center, Deutschtown, Allegheny Commons, Alpha Terrace, and Murray Hill Avenue.

He also oversaw creation of the Pittsburgh Register of Historic Places, adopted by the commission in 1993. The register is a comprehensive list of buildings the city deems worth saving but are not necessarily designated historic.



*Thank You*

*The family would like to express our deepest appreciation and sincerely thank you for your kind expressions of sympathy.*

# Order of Service

## Opening Prayer

Hymn . . . . . "Rock of Ages" ~ #361

Reading . . . . . John 14 (*selected scriptures*) ~ Fran Barbush

## Pastoral Prayer

Special Music . . . . . "Candle On the Water"

Reading . . . . . Revelation 21:1-7 ~ Joe DeSantis

A Time of Remembrance . . . . . Diane Grasso-Thomas

## A Response in Affirmation

Leader: I am learning how to live in a new way since that day you were taken away.

People: I am learning how to live with the things left unsaid knowing I get to say them with every tear that I shed.

Leader: I am learning how to live by embracing the pain knowing that you live on through the memories that remain.

People: I am learning how to live knowing you're in God's care. It gives me the strength to move on and makes the pain somewhat easier to bear.

Leader: And when the work of grieving is done, the wound of loss will heal.

People: And we will have learned to wean your eyes from that gap in the air and the closeness of heart.

Leader: And be able to enter the hearth in your soul where your loved one has awaited your return.

People: For there is a time and a season for every matter under heaven and God has made everything beautiful in its time.

Hymn . . . . . "How Great Thou Art" ~ #77

## Pastoral Prayer

## Benediction