



# Karen Lee Wulfekuehler-Zaiz

AUG 24, 1957 - JAN 6, 2024



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# Karen Lee Wulfekuehler-Zaiz

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**K**aren Lee Wulfekuehler-Zaiz, a name synonymous with resilience and a sprinkle of humor, embarked on her final journey on January 6, 2024, departing peacefully at home. Born on August 24, 1957, in St. Louis County, Missouri, to Eugene and Gloria Wulfekuehler, Karen's life was full of experiences and laughter.

She was an alumna of McCluer North High School and the University of Illinois. Early in life she was known for her willingness to lend a helping hand to friends and strangers alike. She spent many years working at the child care center at Ft. Lewis, Washington, and later held roles with Decatur Public Schools, SAIL, and served as a member of the Macon County Board prior to suffering a life-altering stroke.

Her daughters fondly remember reacquainting with Mom 2.0 post-stroke, whose humor became as legendary as her resilience.

She navigated life's challenges with patience and strength. She triumphed over additional health complications including a heart attack, breast cancer, and aortic stenosis, each time emerging with a bit more wit and a slightly altered perspective that both bemused and endeared her to her family.

Karen's love for sports was known to all as she cheered with unmatched fervor for the Cardinals, the Blues, and the Chiefs. Yet, it was in the quiet winters, with her color-by-number masterpieces by the fire and her iconic "hot grandma summers" by the pool, that Karen's spirit shone brightest.

Karen's mischief with her grandkids gave the family many tales to tell. From her adventures setting off the house alarm as the Easter Bunny to her cartography skills on road trips, each story was more amusing than the last. And we cannot forget her anticipation for the seasonal return of the McRib, her eyes lighting up at the mere mention of the sandwich.



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Over the course of the past 16 years, Karen has had hundreds of healthcare providers treat her, and the family is forever grateful for their care and, in some cases, ongoing friendship. These CNAs, nurses, laboratory and radiology techs, doctors, pharmacists, chaplains, and other health professionals gave her more life and more memories for her family. In lieu of flowers, please take the time to thank a healthcare worker.

Preceded in death by her parents and sisters, Robin and Lauren, Karen's legacy is carried on by her longtime friend, Mel, daughters, Amanda and Jessica, her stepchildren, Christie and Michael, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will miss her dearly.

Karen loved the Orcas of the Pacific Northwest and requested that her ashes find their tranquil resting place near the majestic waters of Washington State. To reflect on her remarkable journey, a celebration of life will be held at a private residence on February 3, where friends and family will gather to share stories, laughter, and maybe even a McRib.

Karen's life was a testament to second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth chances. She will be remembered not just for the battles she fought, but for the joy she brought into the lives of everyone who knew her.

Condolences may be left at [www.gracelandfairlawn.com](http://www.gracelandfairlawn.com).



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Karen by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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