



Shannon Dawn Mittleman

FEB 24, 1971 - JUN 18, 2024



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Shannon Dawn Mittleman, 53, of Decatur, IL passed away on June 18, 2024 surrounded by family. During her time battling cancer, she planned and prepared for her passing to provide some relief from duties families face after a death. Below is her self-written obituary.

One's life is so much more than is written in the typical obituary. That is why, as I fight breast cancer that was first diagnosed in February of 2020 and metastasized to the cerebrospinal fluid as leptomeningeal carcinoma in August of 2022, I have decided to defy convention and write the obituary that defines my life as experienced by me.

I was born on February 24, 1971, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. My childhood involved the typical 70s-80s experiences- long bike rides to places your parents didn't know about, climbing trees, playing with siblings and neighbors, family reunions, girl scouts, best friends, camping, sailing, road trips to Six Flags and Silver Dollar City, school field trips to the state fair, the Love Boat & Fantasy Island, MTV (I could go on and on, but you other 70's kids know what I'm talking about). In short, it was a good childhood. I got an excellent education at Falls-Lakeview School, Central Mid-High, and Norman High School in Norman, Oklahoma and went on to attend the University of Oklahoma while living at home and working at AMC movie theatre (Yes, I was able to pay for my books and tuition with my job- never had to take on any student loans. It's an injustice what kids have to pay today).

During the last summer of college, I took a chance and hopped in my car with two friends to drive to Alaska to see if we could find work in a fishing cannery. We never made it that far, because we managed to snag a job through a fishery in Seattle that needed packers on their factory trawler (a factory out at sea). They flew us to Dutch Harbor, Alaska, and we fought through sea-sickness on the Bering Sea to pack fish into pans for 12 hours a day (6 on and 6 off). It was hard, but also a life-changing experience because it taught me to take chances and seek out adventure.



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After graduating with my degree in elementary education in 1994, I took a 7th grade science teaching position at Stockard Middle School in Dallas, Texas. While there, I made friends with another first-year teacher who invited me home to visit her family in San Angelo. We attended a street festival where I spotted a handsome young man across a dance floor. I asked him to dance, he accepted, we fell in love, and were married on September 27, 1997. At this writing, we have been married for 25 years. We have spent many days together fishing, camping, hiking, reading, watching tv, cooking, traveling, visiting family, laughing, raising two great kids, etc. I can honestly say that the years with Monty have been the best of my life and I could not have been more fortunate than to have met him. He is wonderful.

After our son, Bridger was born in Texas in 1999, we moved our family to central Illinois, near Monty's family. We had Bella in 2000. Again, fortune smiled on us and I was able to be a stay at-home mom until both of our children were in school. I helped make ends meet by running a small in-home daycare where I met friends who are still close today. Even though people often talk negatively about Decatur, IL, it proved to be an excellent town to raise our kids. We spent hours at the Scoville Zoo, the Children's Museum, Kiwanis park, Fairview pool, Nelson park,

Rock Springs Nature Center, and the bike trails. Bridger and Bella attended a fantastic co-op preschool and got the best start to their education at Garfield Montessori school (I loved that school sooo much- especially Mrs. Fuiten, Mrs. Hubbard, and Ms. Scarlet- you all ROCK!). As the kids grew older, our family was able to participate in girl and boy scout activities, softball, orchestra, Decatur Swim Club, Elite Energy Show Choir, Bar and Bat Mitzvah lessons through Temple B'nai Abraham, Tae Kwon Do, and Rock Springs Nature Camp. I loved absolutely every moment of being a mom and am extremely proud of the amazing people Bridger and Bella have become.

Professionally, I taught middle school science a total of 10 years (5 in Texas, and 5 in Decatur). then went on to be the Science and Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator for Decatur Public Schools from 2011- 2015. In that position, I sought out curricular materials and professional development activities for science and social studies teachers. The district sent me to several national conferences in Seattle, San Francisco, San Antonio, Washington D.C., Boston, Chicago, and St. Louis. I was able to plan and facilitate "Family Engineering Nights" in each of the DPS elementary schools where families would explore STEM activities and participate in an engineering challenge (it was a lot of fun!). I also helped lay the groundwork for the First Lego League robotic competition to be hosted in Decatur schools. During my years with DPS, I earned



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a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction and a second Master's degree in Educational Leadership.

When I learned that Illinois State University was seeking someone from Decatur to recruit new teachers from their program to Decatur, I leapt at the chance and became Director of the Decatur Teacher Education Pipeline. For four years, I brought groups of education majors to observe and assist in DPS, visit community agencies that work with the students and families (Project Read Plus, Crossing Healthcare, Good Samaritan Inn, Old King's Orchard, the Salvation Army, MRI, the Decatur Library, and Baby Talk), and provide professional development on topics; such as "trauma-informed schools." Even though few ultimately decided to take a teaching job in Decatur, I believe that the trips did give them a new perspective on struggles lower-income students face in schools. It definitely opened my eyes to the amazing supports Decatur has to offer families. Thank you, community agencies and educators who love our kids and families!

Once the ISU grant came to an end, I took a position as Director of Education at Crossing Recovery Center. I helped those going through substance use treatment get their GEDs, improve their math skills to obtain skilled work, navigate the system to get IDs, birth certificates, high school diplomas, etc. I am most proud of a program I began to help those in recovery obtain their CRSS certificate (Certified Recovery Support Specialist). The patients I met were eager to learn and start a new life. I loved working with them and feel that I did make a difference. I ended up leaving once I received the Stage IV diagnosis because I felt that I needed to spend as much quality time with my family as possible. Since, Monty and I have enjoyed a three-week trip to Yellowstone National Park and Olympic National Park; a two-week trip to Houston, New Orleans, Florida, and Atlanta; an 11-day trip to Italy (ahhh, Italy), and smaller road trips to Pennsylvania, Indiana, etc. Bella and I took a trip to Michigan that we very

much enjoyed. We have also had numerous occasions to visit with family. I have relished every single moment I have spent with my husband, kids, parents, siblings, nieces and nephews, cousins, aunts, and uncles. Family is everything.

So, now, I am sitting on my porch enjoying watching the hummingbirds eat from our feeder, listening to the birds chirping from nearby trees, breathing in the fresh air and feeling the cool breeze blow across my arms. It is a beautiful morning. I am feeling good. I have had a blessed life filled with travel, love, and adventure and am grateful for it.



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Shannon is predeceased by Monty's mother, Carol Marks and his father Marvin Mittleman (Diane).

Shannon is survived by her husband Monty Mittleman, son Alex "Bridger" Mittleman, and daughter Bella Mittleman. She also leaves behind her mother, Linda Trotter, father and step-mother Phil and Anita Trotter, and siblings Robbie Trotter (Aprill, Todd Trotter (Julia), and Marti Hester (Chad) along with nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles, and cousins. On Monty's side, she is survived by his sister Michelle Mittleman-Horner (Greg), brother Adam Mittleman (Celestine), and his step-father Barry Marks (Nancy).

Visitation and funeral service will be held at Graceland/Fairlawn Funeral Home on June 21, 2024 at Graceland Fairlawn Funeral Home from 4-7pm. For those who wish to express sympathy, consider making a donation to my favorite Community Organization, Project Read Plus through Richland Community College.

Project Read Plus provides excellent support to adult learners who need to improve their math or reading skills. They rely on community support and donations to provide these free tutoring services. To find information on donating, go to projectread.richland.edu/donors or write a check to "Richland Community College Foundation" with "Project Read Plus" in the memo line. Mail to: Richland Community College Foundation

ATTN: Project Read Plus One College Park Decatur, IL. 62521

I also encourage all women to conduct breast cancer self-exams as often as possible. I truly believed that if I had done them more regularly, I would have caught my cancer earlier and had more time to spend with my family.




Events


Shannon Dawn Mittleman

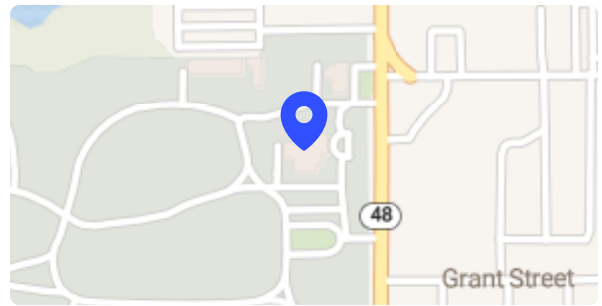
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Visitation

 **Friday**, June 21, 2024

 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM CT

 **Graceland Fairlawn Funeral Home**
2091 N. Oakland Avenue, Decatur IL 62526





Tribute Wall

Shannon Dawn Mittleman

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EM

Edye & Eric Melton sent a Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet to the Mittleman family.



June 21 at 1:21 PM

MK

Molly, Shannon, Maggie, And Krista sent a Pretty Please to the Mittleman family.



June 21 at 12:20 PM

LC

Love Bill, Stephanie, Sierra & Carlos sent a Full Of Love Bouquet to the Mittleman family.



June 21 at 10:05 AM

MS

Mona Sowers posted:

I met Shannon through volunteering opportunities at Decatur Memorial Hospital. Even though I did not know her very long, I found her to be a beautiful person and wished I met her earlier in life! My heart is with her family and friends!

June 21 at 7:45 AM

EM

Eric And Danielle Miller planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Shannon.



June 20 at 4:22 PM



Anonymous sent a Beautiful in Blue to the Mittleman family.



June 20 at 4:22 PM



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BH

Betty Horner lit a candle in honor of Shannon.

I was so glad to meet Shannon personally when she and Monty came to visit me in Knoxville. Prayers, Peace and Comfort. betty Horner

June 20 at 2:07 PM



RD

Rusty Isaiah Downs posted:

May Flights of Angels Sing Thee to Thy Rest. Amen.

June 20 at 5:46 AM

DD

Dave Dawson posted:

So sorry to hear about Shannon. I am deeply grateful for the help she provided me while I was a client at Crossing. Her help and encouragement guided me along a path to find myself and get my life back in order. I know she helped so many others in the same way. Prayers to her family and friends.

June 20 at 5:09 AM

TF

The Miller Family planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Shannon.

June 20 at 4:04 AM



TF

The Miller Family sent a Fairest of All to the Mittleman family.

June 20 at 4:04 AM



DS

David + Suzie Martha (Laura's Sister) sent a Full Of Love Bouquet to the Mittleman family.

June 19 at 3:44 PM





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Michelle Parker posted:

I am so sorry to hear of Shannon's passing. She was a wonderful friend. My thoughts and prayers are with the family.

June 19 at 3:35 PM



Laura, Parvin, Meg & Family, Erin, & Sam sent a Your Light Shines to the Mittleman family.



June 19 at 3:20 PM



Shawna Gordon lit a candle in honor of Shannon.

When we first moved into the neighborhood, Shannon was one of the first to come over and welcome us. She handed over a small piece of paper, with her, Monty, Bridger, and Bella's phone numbers, just in case we needed anything (still have it all these years later). Over the years we've become quite fond of them. We've enjoyed conversations, sitting around the fire, helping babysit their dog and watch their house for them. She would always insist we needed bread, no matter what we helped with, if you ever had the pleasure of tasting her bread, you knew not to say no, it was so delicious, it wouldn't even last an hour usually in our house. She was always so kind and trusting towards us, and we knew we could always count on them, as well as them on us. We truly got blessed when it came to our neighbors and lucky to have called her our friend! We send our prayers and love to her whole family!



June 19 at 12:33 PM



Kyle "Scot" Reynolds lit a candle in honor of Shannon.

Shannon taught Middle School Science during my 5 year tenure at Stephen Decatur Middle School as her Assistant Principal. During this time I witnessed her growth into an outstanding educator. She will be sorely missed as she was an inspiration to so many fellow educators and students. May her memory continue to be a blessing to us all. K. Scot Reynolds Retired Superintendent, Spoon River Valley School District #4



June 19 at 12:19 PM



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Kevin And Lily Miller sent an Arrive in Style to the Mittleman family.

June 19 at 11:51 AM



Jim (Doc), Tana, Jordan & Jayden Maynard sent an Emerald Garden Basket to the Mittleman family.

June 19 at 11:47 AM



Elizabeth Bartimus posted:

I am so very sad to hear of Shannon's passing. It was an honor and a privilege to work with her many times over the years. She was a dynamic educator who always had fresh ideas and was ready to jump on any wild ride I would approach her with. We spent many hours planning so much there is no one memory that can adequately capture the time we spent together. She made me look at my classroom in a new way and was so willing to find a way for me to try something new with grant funds and support. She has left a mark in my career and my heart.

June 19 at 11:07 AM



Memories only last if you share them

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



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