



MARY JOYCE PIEPER

March 1, 1948 - August 14, 2022

Mary Joyce (Gerzmehle) Pieper, 74, of Caledonia, passed away surrounded by family after an amazing 3-year fight with pancreatic cancer on Sunday, August 14, 2022. In her words, she didn't give up, she surrendered.

She was born in Wisconsin Rapids on March 1, 1948 to Shirley (Lutz) and Dick Gerzmehle. A 1966 graduate of Lincoln High School in the Rapids, Mary completed a BS degree in PE, history and social science from the University of Stevens Point (1970), and MS degree in counseling from Winona State University.

On June 7th, 1975 she married Gerald Pieper at the Pittsville Free Church in Pittsville, WI. In their 47-year marriage, they welcomed children DeAnna and Matt. She was an incredible mother and best friend to them.

One of Mary's first jobs was with her dad, at Pre-Way Painters in the Rapids. For the rest of her life, she worked in service to others: Camp Arrowhead counselor, PE teacher in Pittsville, nurse's aide at the Caledonia Nursing Home. She was one of the founders of Houston County Group Homes (now called ABLE). In her 35 years with this organization, Mary taught a great many staff what it means to be an advocate, friend, and multi-skilled professional providing support to persons with disabilities. When she retired in 2013, she continued to be a true friend and advocate to the folks she had come to know through the ABLE organization.

A tireless volunteer, Mary served the ARC SE MN Council in many ways, receiving their highest award in 2019, the Legacy Award. She shared her

expertise with others in service to people with disabilities through the Minnesota Region 10 Quality Assurance Commission. A twenty-year plus Lions member, she held the positions of President, Treasurer, and Chairperson for the Minnesota Lions Diabetes Foundation. The Lions International awarded her their highest honors, as well: the Melvin Jones Award and the Lions Dreamcatcher Award. Most recently, Mary was honored as the 2019 Winter Wonderland Parade Marshall.

As a dedicated member of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Caledonia, Mary was very involved with the church council, WELCA, and many service groups within the church. Years ago, she even taught Sunday School! Mary was a wonderful person. She never expected anyone to do anything that she would not do. She was never afraid to work hard, or to stick her neck out and speak up where she felt it was needed. She believed in fairness, and was a mentor to many people. Throughout the years Mary ended up changing a lot of lives for the better.

In summer, Mary could be found camping in Hatfield with family and friends. She was blessed to have one more camping weekend with the family this past June. During the school year, including this year, you would see Mary donating her time as a ticket seller for school sporting events. Mary treasured her family (especially her grandchildren), and her friends –The Girls, in particular. She loved going for drives in her red Mustang, and visiting casinos. A Packers fan she was, an Aaron Rodgers fan she was not! Christmas time was always her favorite. Let the underwear tradition live on!

Mary is survived by her husband, Gerald; and her 2 children, DeAnna (David) McCabe, Matt Pieper, both of Caledonia. She is also survived by 2 grandchildren: Morgan and Mitchell McCabe, one sibling Steve (Tammy) Gerzmehle of Wisconsin Rapids, brothers-in-law Denny Utecht of Wisconsin Rapids, Tom Hanneman of Wisconsin Rapids, Lyle (Paula) Pieper of LeCenter MN, sister-in-law Robin Pieper of Caledonia and many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents Dick and Shirley Gerzmehle,

sisters Jean and Kathy, and brother Jim, Gerald's parents Fern and Telmer Pieper, and brother-in-law Leonard Pieper.

Funeral Services will be at 11 AM, Saturday, August 27, at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Caledonia. A luncheon will follow. Visitation will be from 9 AM to 11 AM before the service.

As per Mary's wishes, in lieu of flowers, please consider donating to The Minnesota Lions Diabetes Foundation Inc. Envelopes will be available at the church.

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 27. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Immanuel Lutheran Church
419 E Grove St
Caledonia, MN 55921

Funeral Service

AUG 27. 11:00 AM (CT)

Immanuel Lutheran Church
419 E Grove St
Caledonia, MN 55921

Tribute Wall

LY

“*Mary's younger sister, Jean, was a good friend of mine during our high school years. I lived only a few blocks away on Apricot Street. Jean passed away at such a young age, which was very sad. I knew Mary somewhat...she was gregarious and lots of fun. In high school I became a self-taught hair cutter and Mary asked me to cut her hair. OMG What a mistake! The haircut was horrible and Mary (kiddingly) didn't let me forget it right away. It was all in good fun (somewhat). My condolences to the family regarding Mary's passing and the loss of all other family members, with the exception of Steve, to an early passing. They all could have lived longer. God bless all of the surviving members of the Gerzmehle family.*

Laurel Nelson (AKA Laurie Yeager) - March 04, 2023 at 12:29 PM

CN

“*I first got to know Mary in 1985, when as a 26 year old, I was hired to be the Director of Camp Winnebago, a camp for children and adults with disabilities, and Mary was in the Board of Directors. She was generous with her time and I learned a lot from her. We also had fun-carpooling and going out to eat after out of town meetings, and once, after a meeting at camp, we had a slumber party in one of the cabins! I was so impressed by her work with the group home. Later, I got to know her as a fellow champion of the Caledonia pool (many chairs were donated to the new pool, per her suggestion, but we diverged from her suggested green and gold color scheme!). It will be hard to return to the ticket booth at Caledonia football without her as I will always remember her calling out “I can help you down here!” A helper she truly was. ❤️*

Carol Nelson - August 27, 2022 at 01:04 PM

KL

“ I worked with Mary on the Region 10 Quality council. Mary was a valued and dedicated advocate for improving the lives of disabled people and will be greatly missed. I'd like to share some pictures of Mary from the night she received The Legacy Award at The Arc Minnesota Southeast Region Annual Meeting in 2019. Mary was a beautiful friend and will be greatly missed.



Kerri Leucuta - August 27, 2022 at 01:35 AM

KP

“ "Miss G" was a mentor to me when she was my PE teacher at PHS in the 1970's. I am a life that was changed as she planted seeds of faith in my life. So sorry for your loss.
Kathy Parker

Kathy Parker - August 24, 2022 at 07:39 PM

RW

“ My deepest sympathies to the whole Gerzmehle clan. Her camping days were some of her best times! Lots of love to Mitchell and Morgan, as well as the whole family.

Robin Petty Wedl - August 23, 2022 at 09:17 PM



“ Always helping, always smiling, always giving. That was Mary. Such a kind soul. The world needs more people like her.
Jane Palen

Jane Palen - August 23, 2022 at 05:21 PM

CW

“ We're so very sorry for your loss. Mary was a great friend and colleague. Her smile and positive spirit will be greatly missed.

Cheryl Whitesitt - August 21, 2022 at 03:24 PM

RC

“ Region 10 Regional Quality Council purchased the Sweet Tranquility Basket for the family of MARY JOYCE PIEPER.



Region 10 Regional Quality Council - August 20, 2022 at 11:45 AM



“ Pink Potpourri Bouquet was purchased for the family of MARY JOYCE PIEPER.



August 18, 2022 at 09:16 AM

KL

“*Mary Pieper family. I am so sorry for your loss. Mary: You will always be remembered and missed. Mary worked with me on the Regional Quality Council. We interviewed folks with disabilities to find out what was working and what was not working. Then we made recommendations on how to improve services for people with disabilities to the state of Minnesota. Mary was a great listener. She would always go above and beyond searching for the truth. Always raising the bar from good to great from ok to awesome!! She always gave 110% 100% of the time. Her smile says it all: she loved what she did and did what she loved! Thank you Mary!! Mary, you will be remembered and missed!*”



Karen Marie Larson - August 18, 2022 at 09:09 AM

DA

“*Gerald, Matt, DeAnna and family, I am so sorry for your family's loss. I really enjoyed chatting with Mary when I lived across the street. I will be out of town on the 27th, please know that you will all be in my thoughts and prayers....*”

Darla Auge - August 17, 2022 at 10:19 PM

DS

“*Mary was one-of-a-kind. I worked with her at Cal Care. I also had a working relationship with her when she worked at ABLE & I was at county. What a delightful person she was! Our sympathy is extended to the Pieper family!*”

Dave & Wilma Schoh - August 17, 2022 at 10:05 PM

RS

My condolences to Mary's family, especially my wonderful neighbors=Deanna,Dave,Morgan & Mitchell.

Robert L. Snodgrass - August 21, 2022 at 11:24 AM

PN

I am so very sorry to hear of Mary's passing. I worked with Mary while at ABLE. Mary was one of the most approachable P.D. and fair person I had the pleasure to work with. We had many chats and she was always understanding and said it as it was. I will miss her so very much. Rest now Mary and know how much you meant to so many people. Hugs Pat

Pat Niedercorn - August 21, 2022 at 10:01 PM

MV

*Deepest sympathy to Mary's family.
Eric and Marilee Vogel*

Marilee Vogel - August 22, 2022 at 12:19 PM

ES

SO SORRY OF MARYS PASSING..I WAS A FRIEND OF HER MOM AND I ALSO WORKED WITH JEAN AT THE TELEPHONE CO. SHIRLEY AND I HAD OUR WEEKLY COFFEE AND CHAT WHEN WE MET AT A LOCAL RESTAURANT. ALSO RECALL JIMS PASSING AND JEANS AND MY DEAR FRIEND SHIRLEY. ALL LIKE MY OWN FAMILY.."MY DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO ALL" LOVE AND PRAYERS/

ELAINE J SWETZ - August 26, 2022 at 08:55 AM