

Kathy Hornbaker



She was an award winning pie baker at age 24. She touched the lives of hundreds of children as a grade school teacher and youth group leader. She was a loving and devoted wife and mother. And her smiling, friendly, freckled face told you she led a life of joy and happiness, which she freely shared with everyone she met.

Kathy Ann Hornbaker was born on March 13, 1952, in Jacksonville, Illinois, to Earl and Eileen Niestrad. She married Rich Hornbaker in 1973.

She graduated from Bushnell Prairie City High School in 1970, and from Illinois State University in 1975, and taught at Leepertown Grade School and Tiskilwa Grade School prior to starting a family.

Kathy and Rich established Hornbaker Gardens in 1987. Kathy's friendly personality and love of gardening were key ingredients to the success of the business. She loved children and animals. Dogs and cats have always been present. And friends, relatives and early customers will remember her pet geese and several resident raccoons that she helped raise. That same year, Kathy began homeschooling their three children, and did so for six years.

She was active in Hampshire Colony Church, and then Open Prairie United Church of Christ, where she was a youth group leader for many years. Kathy was also a member of the Princeton chapter of P.E.O.

Kathy died at the age of 62, on August 11, 2014 at Cabin Livin' in rural Hennepin, Illinois, as a result of frontal lobe dementia, which was diagnosed 7 years ago.

Surviving are her parents, Earl and Eileen Niestrad, of Bushnell, Illinois; her husband, Rich, of Princeton; three children, Sara (Mike) Tracey of Normal, Illinois, Molly (Russ) Blogg of Princeton, and David (Laura Marek) Hornbaker of Princeton; two grandchildren, Caleb and Addison Tracey; four siblings, Jim (Gayle) Niestrad of Cincinnati, Ohio, Bob (Kathy) Niestrad of Shelbyville, Illinois, Dan Niestrad of Lake Oswego, Oregon, and Janet (Andy) Schoneman of Western Springs, Illinois, and numerous nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by a daughter, Rebecca, who was stillborn in 1980.

Cremation rites will be accorded. Visitation will be Friday, August 22, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Hornbaker Gardens, and a memorial service celebrating her life will be held the following day, Saturday, August 23, at 4:00 p.m., also at the Gardens.

The family asks that, in lieu of flowers, memorial donations be directed to Open Prairie Church in Princeton to be used for youth activities and education, or to Princeton Public Library for the children's library.

