



Debra Kay Pankey

February 26, 1955 - September 18, 2019

Debra Kay Pankey, age 64, passed away peacefully in her sleep with her children sleeping by her side at the Spokane Hospice House after a courageous battle with ALS on September 18th, 2019. Born in Spokane, WA on February 26th, 1955, Debra grew up in the close-knit town of Lincoln, WA and went to school in Creston, WA, graduating in 1973 with 12 classmates, who she remained friends with her entire life. She married one of her Creston classmates, Ken Lathrop, and had three children with him; Bree, Mark, and Max. The family moved to Colville, WA in 1980 where Debra raised her children and began a life of service to others. Debra had many careers and excelled at all of them. Before entering the teaching profession, she held positions at Boise Cascade, Alcoa, acted as an insurance and real estate agent and started a gym (which included a stint in competitive bodybuilding). After earning her Master's degrees in Special Education from Whitworth University and a Master's of Education in Educational Leadership from Gonzaga University, Debra served as a Special Education Teacher, Principal, and Superintendent throughout her nearly 30-year teaching career. Debra's joy for life was evident in how much she loved her recreational pursuits. An avid outdoorswoman, Debra would gladly fill your extra deer tag or fish limit if you couldn't keep up with her. Always the athlete, Debra was a fan of the game; coaching and refereeing basketball and volleyball all the while playing volleyball, basketball, and softball both in college and into her 60's. A member of the "One-Armed Bandits" (yes, there were shirts) with her

mother, Carol Pankey, she loved the casino and the thrill of hitting a big jackpot. Debra was at her second home near the water, owning a condo in Cabo San Lucas for the beach in the winter and growing up on Lake Roosevelt in a boat during the Northwest summers. The boats kept getting bigger throughout her life, as did the quality of her tan. Always living life to her fullest, even after her diagnosis, Debra went skydiving in Cabo and took all of her children and grandchildren to Disneyland. What Debra really lived for was her family, especially her grandchildren (Maddox and Hadley Vestal and Liberty Lathrop), who knew her fondly as "MoMo". Debra is also survived by children Bree (Jason) Vestal, Mark (Sarah) Lathrop, and Max (Becky) Lathrop, her loving father, Roy Pankey, of Colville, WA, sister Diane (Jodi) Mills of Kettle Falls, WA, brother Mark (Tammy) Pankey, of Newman Lake, WA, numerous nieces and nephews, many of her children's friends who consider her a second mom, and significant other Rick Wilson, who was faithfully by her side until the end. She is preceded in death by her mother, Carol Pankey. A celebration of life is scheduled for Sunday, September 29th at 2 p.m. at Liberty Lake Wine Cellars (23110 E. Knox, Liberty Lake, WA). Debra loved a good time and wanted a party. Please come dressed casual and ready to share fun stories. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to the wonderful ALSSO Foundation (alssso.org) or ALS Association-Evergreen Chapter (webwa.alsa.org) who helped through every step of this journey.

Tribute Wall

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“ I am sorry for your lost. Sending prayers to you and your family. I knew Debra thru Diane Pankey Mills and when I lived down at Lincoln. I just remembered how nice and kind she was.

Melodie (Harrington)Barringer - October 04, 2019 at 01:12 AM

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“ Debra’s memory will live on through those she has touched, especially the children of Nespelem, whom she loved and cared for. May Family and friends find peace and cherish those special moments spent with her. I will remember her eagerness to learn.

Alma Chacon - September 22, 2019 at 01:54 PM

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“ Debra willingly gave her heart and soul to the children she served at Nespelem. She made allowances for whatever they demonstrated to her they needed and gave to them freely. The world, especially the world of children, benefited greatly from her drive, determination, and generous, loving contributions. She spoke lovingly and proudly of her own children and grandchildren. Those who knew her well will certainly miss her most, but her light will continue to shine for many, many others, as well. She was a unique, positive, giving spirit. May her family find peace and comfort in the many memories they hold dear of her.

Noreen Sampson - September 22, 2019 at 12:15 PM

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“ *Debra had a deep love for the children she served in Nespelem. They were lucky to have such a heart commitment from her. May God comfort your hearts as you grieve the light and joy she added to the world*

Rachelle Mulder - September 22, 2019 at 10:37 AM