



Kathy Smith

August 1, 1952 - December 25, 2020

After surviving the challenges of ovarian and brain cancer for 11 years, Kathy Jane (Blank) Smith, 68, of Nashville, Tennessee, formerly of Effingham, Illinois, passed away peacefully at home at 6:36 a.m. on December 25, 2020. She was surrounded by family, including her beloved Goldendoodle, Izzy, who was named after Dr. Israel Zigelboim, the surgeon who saved her life during her first grueling surgery and difficult first rounds of chemotherapy.

Kathy was born August 1, 1952 in Carbondale, Illinois, to the late Harold J. Blank and Christina (Bryant) Blank. She is survived by her husband of fifty years, Charles Ross Smith, her son, Justin Smith (Rena) of Crestwood, KY, and her daughter, Jennifer Wolczyk (Ian) of Nashville, TN and grandchildren Jacob and Suzannah Smith, Violet and Roman Wolczyk. Kathy is also survived by: her siblings Karen Blank-Ewell of Effingham, Kristina Blank Makansi (Jason) of Tucson, AZ, James Blank (Laura) of Catonsville, MD and as well as Emma Smith, Kaye Kimpling (Terry) of Effingham; John Smith (Susan) of Carbondale, Deb Gregory (Gary) of Edgewood, and nieces and nephews: Bonnie Kimpling, Laura Estrada, Kristina Lehman (Jonathan), Charlie Ewell (Sarah), Amira Makansi, Elena Makansi, Amy Blank, Stephen Blank.

Having grown up in a family that loved hiking, camping, and exploring the outdoors, Kathy relished long walks and taking photos of nature, especially trees, flowers, and bees. She met her husband, Charlie, while attending Little Grassy United Methodist Church Camp in Southern Illinois, and they married

in August 1970. They celebrated their 50-year anniversary this past August by camping and biking in Southern Illinois. Kathy loved living on Lake Sara, outside of Effingham, and enjoyed boating and waterskiing, even skiing as late as August this past summer. She also enjoyed snowskiing, scuba diving, visiting state and national parks across the country, and traveling abroad. Taking after her beloved Aunt Helen, Kathy enjoyed learning about family history and listening to family stories. She often spent her free time reading historical fiction and biographies of historical figures. After getting her nursing degree and starting her medical career, she went back to night school and received a Bachelor's degree from Eastern Illinois University.

After two dangerous bouts of rheumatic fever as a child which caused her to miss a significant amount of school, she participated in clinical trials on the effects of long-term penicillin treatment. Later, after she was diagnosed with cancer, she participated in ovarian cancer clinical trials and firmly believed in supporting research in science and medicine. She began her nursing career as an Emergency Room nurse and nearly 30 years as a dialysis nurse. She was dedicated to helping others and had a caring, careful, and precise manner that engendered trust and respect from patients and colleagues alike. Kathy was gentle, compassionate, and curious with a sense of adventure and a love of learning. As a life-long member of the United Methodist Church (UMC), she went on medical and hurricane-relief missions to Central America, the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico, and helped build and renovate homes in Henderson Settlement in Kentucky. For years, she played handbells in the Centenary UMC choir in Effingham where she also taught Sunday School and volunteered with the youth group. Later in life, she discovered a love of personal fitness and enjoyed Crossfit several times a week.

Kathy was a devoted friend whose relationships spanned decades and long distances. She was a good listener, a silly and generous grandma, an advocate for those less fortunate, a voice for the voiceless, and a beautiful, loving daughter, wife, sister, and mother whose memory will be forever treasured by those she left behind.

Due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, there will be no memorial service at this time. She will be interred at Rose Hill Cemetery in Marion, IL next to her parents. Donations in Kathy's name may be made to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Henderson Settlement or to the Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance.

Tribute Wall



“ *Kathy Smith*

October 14, 2022 at 08:02 PM



“ *Kathy was an amazing person. She helped make mission trips memorable and fun. She stayed so strong through all the things life handed her and she was a woman I looked up to. She will be missed greatly. Charlie and family I will keep you in my thoughts and prayers.*

Kelly Mitchell (Utter) - January 06, 2021 at 04:31 PM



“ *William Sabella purchased the Peace, Prayers, & Blessings- Lavender and White for the family of Kathy Smith.*



William Sabella - January 06, 2021 at 12:58 PM



“ *My memories of Kathy are of a beautiful woman always with a friendly smile. I owe much of my faith to the many experiences provided by Kathy and Charlie along with several other UMYF parents when I was a kid. Thank you to Charlie, Justin and Jennifer for sharing your wife and mother with the rest of us kids at CUMC. I also thank God for the fulfilling life of Kathy and I pray for peace for your entire family.*

Waylon Waymoth - January 05, 2021 at 11:09 PM

KJ

“ Charlie and family, we are thinking of you and keeping you in our prayers ! We are blessed to have known Kathy - such a very special person and now in heaven with our Lord !

kendra Johnson - January 05, 2021 at 07:57 PM

SW

“ Having gone to the same church with Kathy for 30 years, I have seen the love she had for her family and friends, her faith in the Lord, her grace while overcoming her many health scares, all the time inspiring those who knew her. Condolences to her children and her faithful husband who loved her dearly. She will be missed.

Sherry Wei - January 05, 2021 at 07:19 PM

JB

“ What a legacy Kathy left for love of family, faith in God, and determination to live life to the fullest! Prayers for Charlie and the family to sustain them through their loss.
Linda and Jim Brissenden

Jim Brissenden - January 05, 2021 at 06:54 PM

SM

“ Kathy was one of those people who made the world a better place. She always thought of others and how she could help. The way she lived with cancer - really lived - is an inspiration. She slapped a smile on her face and kept living her life. She fiercely loved God and her family. She will be missed. My condolences to Charlie, Justin, and Jennifer and the rest of the family and friends that she leaves behind.

Sue Ann Minor - January 05, 2021 at 06:04 PM

LY

“ Definitely Heaven’s gain and our loss...Kathy was a beautiful person inside & out...always willing to help someone, putting others above herself! What an example of strength she was to all who knew her! I will miss her gentle voice & glowing smile! Prayers for Charlie, Justin & Jen! 🙏

Linda Youngblood - January 05, 2021 at 05:21 PM

VW

“ I will remember Kathy's strength and positive attitude through the years of her battle with cancer. She once said she knew her prognosis was not good, but she was going to live till she died. That she did with grace, kindness, and determination! It was pleasure to know her and a joy to my heart to share our children and grandchildren with her. She will be missed and always remembered.
Vicki Wolczyk

Vicki Wolczyk - January 05, 2021 at 12:45 PM