



James-Garrett Kanuwodi Amayi-Kelley

August 31, 1983 - November 28, 2025

James-Garrett Kanuwodi Amayi-Kelley was born at home on August 31, 1983, in Tucson, AZ, to Elizabeth G. Bunker and James A. Kelley. The monsoons arrived the day of his birth after a long drought. His middle name, Kanuwodi Amay Healing Waters in Cherokee became his lifelong name to many: Waters. He grew up at Windancer Ranch in the Cochise Stronghold, where the beauty of the canyon rooted in him a deep love of nature. In childhood, he moved to Glastonbury, CT, though he continued to spend significant time at the ranch and returned there throughout his life. James-Garrett graduated from Glastonbury High School and Central Connecticut State University with a Bachelor of Science in Education. In Glastonbury he found his boys, a tight-knit group of friends he cherished as family. His first great loves were his dogs, Sage and Raja, and he adored their offspring. He is survived by the daughter Princess and granddaughter Duchess. In 2007 he traveled with his father to Colorado to see Further at Red Rocks. His father called an old friend Florian, who brought James's future mother-in-law, setting in motion the next great chapter of his life. In 2010 he moved to Colorado to pursue a career in the legal cannabis industry. It was there his first date with Coral Hackler was arranged by their parents. The two first lived in Wonderful, CO and he took a position as a snowboard instructor at Eldora Mountain Resort. It was there he met a group of friends who later joined his boys as groomsmen. Their next adventure was working as raft and zip-line guides for River Riders in Harpers Ferry, WV. They moved back to Colorado that winter opting for more terrain at

Copper Mountain Ski Resort. They dreamed of sustainable living and moved to Windancer ranch in 2012. He worked alongside his father to restore the family home. He began to live life by the motto "Minimize my carbon footprint, maximize my human imprint". He worked tirelessly growing their own vegetables and raising poultry. Waters often gave his time to assist elders and friends. He shared his father's passion for art and set up his glass blowing studio, specializing in decorative marbles and pendants. Ranch life was tough and they eventually moved back to Colorado and found a dream job as caretakers of Joyful Journey Hot Springs in the San Luis Valley. It was close to there at Cotton Creek that they married under the Perseid meteor shower with over 200 friends in attendance in 2015. They moved back to Leadville, Colorado and for one summer lived in a tipi at 10,000 ft. It was there he starred on the TV show Building Off the Grid: High Altitude Hideout. In 2018 they spent winter in Vermont working for Outdoor Gear Exchange. He came back to Boulder, CO and worked on a large CBD farm. They were enjoying city life but when COVID hit in 2020 they moved back to Windancer Ranch. During that time Waters acquired his Soil Food Web, permaculture design, and rainwater harvesting certifications and began his landscaping company Sun Waters Soil Systems. In 2021 Waters became a leader in the AZ underground music scene, bringing community together despite the world shutting down. It was through throwing these musical events that he formed some of his closest bonds, what they called the Of the Love pride. Not all love stories have happy endings. They separated in 2023, and James returned to CT to be closer to "his boys". There he embraced new passions, biking, riding his One Wheel, and started a promising career in roofing sales. In June 2025, he reconnected with Ashley McCabe and found love again. He embraced a fatherly role with enthusiasm, looked forward to teaching adventure sports to her son, Weston, and joyfully anticipated the birth of their daughter in May 2026. He took great pride in purchasing what he believed was the safest car on the market for his growing family. On November 28, 2025, James-Garrett left us for the astral plane after a tragic car accident in that new car a few days

later. His passing has sent ripples of grief across the many communities he touched. He often said he hoped his death would help bring people back together. The tattoo on his right wrist remember why you came remains a message to all who knew him: a reminder that our purpose is to spread love. Waters built community wherever he went. His humor, warmth, eloquence, and adventurous spirit drew people together. Friends often joked that he could have been a cult leader, given his gift for inspiring and motivating others. He was unwaveringly loyal, the first to offer help, and the friend people called when they needed guidance. He is survived by his parents, Elizabeth G. Bunker and James A. Kelley; his sister, Elizabeth Kelley-Hogan, her husband Noah and their 4 children; his half-brother, Benjamin Van Raam; his partner, Ashley McCabe; and their unborn daughter.

Cemetery Details

Windancer Family Memorial

Coch, AZ 85606

Tribute Wall

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“ *My son and I met James through his work at the roofing company. He was a kind, attentive and bright young man*

We chatted about family, and he spoke fondly of his being an Uncle, and adopting the son of his wife. They were preparing for the birth of their child, and he was smiling ear to ear when he spoke of the baby, and the children already in his life.

You could see this young man enjoyed caring for the children in his family and loved them with all his heart.

I was so sad to hear today of his passing because we hadn't heard back from him when we were texting him, and that was extremely unusual. I felt in my heart that something was wrong. It just wasn't consistent with his personality.

I am so terribly sorry for all of you, especially the children he cared for so much. Loss does so much damage to people. It leaves big holes in your heart that you just can't fill.

I pray you can all eventually find peace and be able to smile again I am sure this is a huge loss for your entire family

Adele Shanbar and Robert J Castater III



adele shanbar - December 16, 2025 at 12:49 PM