



Karen Ferrara

February 21, 1960 - May 3, 2020

Karen Denise Ferrara

02/21/60 – 05/03/2020

Karen Denise Ferrara (Fowler) passed away peacefully on May, 3, 2020 in Tucson, Arizona with her best friend and loving husband/partner of 22 years, Bruce Springer by her side. She is also survived by her son, Nicholas Emerson Ferrara (Haley Heim Ferrara), brother David Lance Fowler (Kelly Patton Fowler), nieces Kenzie Fowler-Quinn (Kyle Quinn), and Mattie Fowler-Burkhardt (Nick Burkhardt). She is preceded in death by her father, David Lane Fowler, and mother, Marilyn Parish Fowler.

Karen was born in Lubbock, Texas on February 21, 1960. In 1964 the family moved from west Texas to farm in the Kansas Settlement area near Willcox, Arizona. 1974 brought about a move to Dos Cabezas where they lived until Karen's senior year, at which time they moved to the city of Willcox. Karen and her younger brother, Lance, attended Willcox schools for the entire length of their primary and secondary education, with Karen graduating from Willcox High School in 1978. She went on to attend Pima Community College and the University of Arizona, graduating in 1984.

Karen worked multiple jobs while attending college and had a variety of

experiences which included the service industry, farm to table programs and community food bank services. She had a vow of poverty and volunteerism in those early days. She started her service to others by cooking at Pine Canyon United Methodist Church Camp in the Chiricahua Mountains. As a young adult she joined the Domestic Peace Corps and helped establish the first community food bank in the Tucson area. Her son, Nick, relays that Karen always emphasized to him that everyone should experience working in the hospitality industry at some point in life to use as a building block in developing empathy. She also loved being part of political activism and participated in many political campaigns in her younger days. She worked for eight years at the Pima County Superior Court, first in the Pretrial Services Division and, later in Court Administration where she designed and developed that court's first training and education department.

Karen was selected to be Cochise County's first court administrator in 1991. Working directly with the presiding judge they embarked upon an era of professionalizing the county's court system, always on the side of protecting the public and striving to maintain the neutrality of the justice system. She held point in implementing a judicial branch personnel system, court security, court automation, alternative dispute resolution program, domestic relations education training, court interpreter program, built and modernized court facilities, to include the juvenile detention facility, and reengineered case processing standards to reduce court delay and expense. Many of these programs were the first to be created outside the urban areas of Maricopa and Pima counties. She was co-founder of Cochise County's annual Law Day event in which the county's school children became integral participants of the commemoration of law in our everyday lives. The Court Appointed Special Advocate Program (CASA) was of high importance to her in providing dependent children a neutral and unbiased voice.

Karen's contribution to judicial administration was not limited to Cochise

County. She served in many leadership positions within the state's court administrators association. The Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court appointed her to serve on many state committees, commissions, and the Arizona Judicial Council. She was the recipient of many awards and honors, to include the prestigious 2012 State Judicial Branch Distinguished Service Award.

Once, after attending a conference in Ohio, Karen and Bruce were scheduled to fly out of Pittsburgh to return home. Extra time allowed them to attend a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball game. The sights, sounds and smells were overwhelming to both. And thus began a new passion – the love of sports, especially baseball.

Karen retired in the spring of 2012 to enjoy life with Bruce. They had a passion for their beautiful yard, animals, and wildlife. Traveling to baseball parks around the country was something they carefully planned out and were able to enjoy over a period of years. Road trips to the west coast to visit her son Nick, her pride and joy, became another favorite destination. A true reflection of her character was the loving care she and Bruce provided for her parents in their final years.

Her brother Lance compared Karen to a “salsa bar” – spicy, with an abundance of tapas, always beautifully laid out with plenty of color and zest. Karen went “all out” in everything she undertook, never doing anything halfway. A perfect example was cooking for others, a passion of hers that touched countless people. One shared memory was Karen's extraordinary ability to leave her imprint on so many with the special care she took in gift giving. It was an art and it delighted her that each carried significance. She was a lover of words, a quick wit and easily one of the most intelligent persons many of us will ever meet. She also had high expectations of others and very

little tolerance for anyone who was not kind. "Because nice Matters".

Most importantly Karen should be remembered as a fierce "champion of the people". Perhaps she was meant to be here to make people feel better and be better. Her compassion for humanity was unmatched.

A quote from Nick speaks for many of us. "Mom saw love everywhere in the world. Things that the rest of us would overlook, she would always stop and show me those signs of love with a smile on her face. I didn't realize it then, but she was teaching me how to appreciate life. And life has now taught all of us how much we appreciated her".

A Celebration of Life for Karen will be held at a future date.

Note: For those who wish to make a donation in Karen's memory, please consider her two favorite charities: Just Kids, Inc. (Sierra Vista) and World Central Kitchen.

Tribute Wall



“ I was a friend of her husband, Bruce, for many years. I can remember when Bruce moved to Bisbee from Mesa, met Karen (as they both worked for the county), and it was love for both of them! Just now found this obituary, so sad to hear her passing. She was so full of life! Loved cooking, and most of all, loved Bruce! My belated condolences to her family and friends.

steve varsack - October 03, 2025 at 09:52 PM



“ *Karen Ferrara*

January 30, 2023 at 12:50 AM

WH

“ I was fortunate to have worked with Karen for many of the years she served as Cochise County Court Administrator. From the time I was sworn in as a newly-minted judge until her retirement when I was in my last year as presiding judge, she kept the judicial system in this county on the right path. She did her job with diligence, competence, and good humor. She made my job easier. She made the Superior Court better.

On the wall of her office in Bisbee she had a framed motto, a motto written in crayon by her son, Nick, when he was quite young. It said: "Always tie your shoes." She was proud of that motto -- and, of course, proud of her son. And why not? That was pretty good advice. It wouldn't hurt for all of us to keep it mind.

With great sorrow and condolences to Bruce and Nick, et al., for your loss.

Wally

Wallace Hoggatt - June 01, 2020 at 03:08 PM

SH

“ Karen Ferrara was an awesome supervisor with a very caring and kind spirit. Very grateful she hired me at the Superior Court in Cochise County years ago. I so happened contacted a former co-worker after many years today and was told this news. Blessings to Karen's family and friends.

Sherry Howard - June 01, 2020 at 03:04 PM

TR

“ My favorite memories of Karen were reviewing budgets over lunch that she made for us with the best quiche ever and standing outside the side-door of the courthouse in Old Bisbee for a breath of fresh air during an afternoon break from budget meetings. Her integrity and kindness were evident in her devotion to humanitarian causes. Whether at work or play, she was a treasure to be around always. The world is a little dimmer now that she is gone but, I think the heavens have been brightened with her star.

Tracey Rocco - May 20, 2020 at 04:32 PM

ME

“ Martha Elkins lit a candle in memory of Karen Ferrara



Martha Elkins - May 17, 2020 at 07:08 PM

CH

“ Candece Hardt lit a candle in memory of Karen Ferrara



Candece Hardt - May 16, 2020 at 01:41 AM

RC

“ I had the honor of working around Karen for about 10 years. I always admired her. She had unwavering strength behind a smile that lit every room she entered. News of her passing was a shock. Condolences to all she touched.

Roger H. Contreras - May 15, 2020 at 04:05 PM

VB

“ I was so sorry and surprised to hear of Karen's passing. She always had such a flair for life and was very much appreciated when I worked with Juvenile while she was the Court Administrator. i will never forget the one time we had a staff Christmas party and and my son took her dancing all around the dance floor. She was worn out when she came back. Those were some good times. She will be sorely missed.

Vicki Barton

Vicki Barton - May 14, 2020 at 03:39 PM

DL

“ My deepest sympathy to Karen's family. I had the privilege of working with her for 17 years at Cochise County Superior Court and consider myself fortunate to interact with someone with her combination of intelligence, knowledge and joy of life. She was a dear friend and we enjoyed a variety of outings over the years. She sure loved watching her nieces play high school and college softball at such a high caliber. She gushed as she sent out photos and videos of Nick and Haley's travel adventures and wedding activities. She was so giving of herself in many ways and will be greatly missed.

Denise Lundin

Denise Lundin - May 13, 2020 at 08:00 PM

JG

“ James Giacomino-Wesley lit a candle in memory of Karen Ferrara



James Giacomino-Wesley - May 10, 2020 at 08:03 PM

PG

“ *Our thoughts and prayers are with Lance and the rest of Karen's family*

Pat and Wesley Gaskill - May 08, 2020 at 10:10 PM

CL

“ *Our Prayers and Condolences to Lance and the family!*
The Cleckler Family



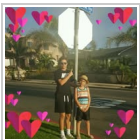
Cleckler's - May 08, 2020 at 04:31 PM

TF

“ *The Cleckler Family lit a candle in memory of Karen Ferrara*



The Cleckler Family - May 08, 2020 at 04:28 PM



“ *Betsy Ajeman lit a candle in memory of Karen Ferrara*



Betsy Ajeman - May 07, 2020 at 01:35 PM

DB

“ My heart goes out to Bruce, Nick, and all of Karen’s family at this sad time. A woman of deep compassion, superior intellect, and strength of character, Karen was my good friend and I admired her greatly.

Donna Beumler - May 07, 2020 at 05:38 AM

KW

“ Lance and family, we are so sorry to hear about Karen. We are praying for you during this difficult time. I have such fond memories of our childhood together and your parents. May God be with you.
Love, Joe and Kim Webb

kim webb - May 06, 2020 at 11:32 PM

CD

“ Carol Dickson lit a candle in memory of Karen Ferrara



Carol Dickson - May 06, 2020 at 05:11 PM

TM

“ So sorry to hear of Karen’s passing. Praying for you and your family Lance.

Trey Moses - May 06, 2020 at 12:17 AM

TG

“ My condolences to Lance and family. I’m saddened to see Karen left us way too soon!

Terri Buckner - Guice - May 05, 2020 at 08:19 PM

BB

“ RIP Karen, hard to believe. What great times we had growing up together in Willcox. See you in the other side!
My condolences Lance and family

Bart Buckner - May 05, 2020 at 08:06 PM

PH

“ I worked with Karen and very much enjoyed that time. My heart goes out to all her family and friends. She was a force and is missed.

Pamela Housh - May 05, 2020 at 07:31 PM

SA

“ Susan&John Arbuthnot lit a candle in memory of Karen Ferrara



Susan&John Arbuthnot - May 05, 2020 at 03:02 PM



“ Karen, what a dear friend and colleague. I am fortunate enough to say I worked with her as a fellow Court Administrator and learned so much. I am more fortunate to say we had wonderful times as friends as well. You were taken from us too soon. Rest in peace my dear friend, I love you.

My condolences to the family in this very difficult time. May you find comfort in your memories of such a wonderful soul.

Marla Widmaier

Marla Randall Widmaier - May 05, 2020 at 01:31 PM

HF

So much agree w you Marla. We grew up 1/2 mile apart & I worked for her dad on their farm.... practiced law for 32yrs & saw her often in Bisbee...

I was a close friend of her parents up to the time they passed.... My condolences to Lance and the family.

Hector Figueroa - May 05, 2020 at 02:33 PM

CM

I'm so sorry to hear of Karen's passing. It's so sad and truly a loss to have her taken so soon. She will be missed. My prayers and condolences to her family.

Charlotte Mix - May 06, 2020 at 02:03 AM

MB

Wishes for peace for Karen and Karen's family. You left too soon. ❤️

Marty Seidel Bond - May 08, 2020 at 11:02 AM

MS

Karen was such a compassionate and kind person. I have so many fond memories of school and beyond. She definitely left us too soon! Sending prayers and hugs to her family! She will be missed!

Michele Shannon - May 12, 2020 at 11:40 AM

JK

“ *Sending love your way,
my brother Lance*

Jimmy Kirk - May 05, 2020 at 07:19 AM

RG

“ *Prayers... deepest condolences to the family.*
❤️



Roxy Garza-Roffey - May 04, 2020 at 11:51 PM

HF

“ Karen may you R.I.P....
When you join David & Marilyn in heaven please give them a big hug....
Lots of KS Farm, Court & Elk Lodge Memories....

Hector Figueroa - May 04, 2020 at 10:17 PM

GM

“ Gus & Rita Morales sent a virtual gift in
memory of Karen Ferrara



Gus & Rita Morales - May 04, 2020 at 09:49 PM