

## DENA HOFKOSH



Died on Tuesday, September 26, 2023 at the age of 68, peaceful and curious about this step on her journey. Dena had a New York City childhood of roller skating, Central Park, theater, a long subway ride to Bronx Science High School and New York University. Dena's warm and loving parents, Jack and Naomi, both physical therapists, nurtured her curiosity and taught her the value of integrity and

independence. Her mother's sister, Ruth Silverstein, a high school Spanish teacher, took her to Europe at the age of 13 and launched a love of travel and languages. She initially resisted her parents' pressure to attend medical school (NYU) but realized their wisdom and was profoundly grateful that they set her on that path.

In 1979, Dena married classmate Jay Weiskopf and the couple moved to Pittsburgh for medical training. Dena fell in love with Pittsburgh and put down deep roots in Squirrel Hill, which had a comfortable cement:tree ratio and bagels within walking distance from home.

Dena completed pediatric residency and fellowship at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, her professional home for a 40-year career. She evaluated countless children with developmental challenges and sat with their families sharing difficult news as well as hope. She had a passion for medical education and, as the pediatric residency director, oversaw the professional development of over 700 pediatric residents at Children's Hospital.

Dena excelled at gathering the right group of people to help bring ideas into fruition. One of her favorite phrases "Help me think about this" launched many collaborative educational projects including Med Ed Day at Pitt Med School, and the UPMC Physician Well-Being Symposium.

She was President of the Association of Pediatric Program Directors and the Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs at Pitt Medical School. At the time of her retirement in 2021, Dena was serving as the Vice Chair for Faculty Development in the Department of Pediatrics, setting standards for educational scholarship and providing mentorship for faculty.

Dena fell in love with her children before each was born and they deepened her compassion and insight into the joys and challenges of parenting, making her a better pediatrician. Dena was never happier than when she was with her daughters. She adored her sister, brother-in-law and their wonderful children. The family was small but full of love.

Dena struggled for years with her sexuality, finally "coming out" as a lesbian at the age of 48 and leaving her marriage. While she continued to regret the pain she caused people she loved, she lived the rest of her life with integrity and obvious joy. She was visible and vocal about diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in the medical community, serving on the Board of Directors of the Persad Center, developing PRIDEHealth and planning learning experiences in LGBTQ+ health for medical students. As an openly gay woman in a position of leadership, she was a role model for students, trainees, and faculty in the LGBTQ+ community. The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine established the Dena Hofkosh Medical School Pride Alliance Scholarship Fund in her honor.

Dena married her best friend, Kim Patterson, a social worker, in 2017 having found the perfect yin to her yang. They both embodied the spirit of tikkun olam-the dedication to repair the world-and together built a life of service and a welcoming home. They shared a love of travel, watching the sunset in Rehoboth, glamping in the RV, and all the hilarious, awful, moving, joyful and mundane parts of a full life.

Diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2019, Dena learned to face her mortality with grace and to live fully with both grief and joy as her constant companions.

She is survived by her wife Kim Patterson, her daughters Julia Martin (Derek) and Sarah Weiskopf (Mikynsi Steffan), her sister Sonia Hofkosh, her brother-in-law Jon Hulbert and their children, Eliza Hofkosh-Hulbert (Ledah Wilcox) and Nina Hofkosh-Hulbert. She is also survived by many grateful colleagues and friends.

Services at Rodef Shalom Temple, 4905 Fifth Avenue (at Morewood) on Thursday, September 28, 2023 at 11 AM. No prior visitation. Interment Homewood Cemetery.

To honor Dena's legacy, donations may be made to:

Dena Hofkosh MD Endowed Fund for Faculty Development at UPMC Children's Hospital, <https://www.justgiving.com/hofkosh>; University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Dena Hofkosh Medical School Pride Alliance Scholarship Fund, [engage.pitt.edu/project/27349](https://engage.pitt.edu/project/27349); or a charity of your choice.

Funeral arrangements entrusted to **RALPH SCHUGAR CHAPEL, INC.**, family owned and operated.

[www.schugar.com](http://www.schugar.com)

Send condolences [post-gazette.com/gb](mailto:post-gazette.com/gb)