

MARY ELLEN ZEPPUHAR



Dr. Mary Ellen Zeppuhar, Ed.D., 75, formerly of Pittsburgh, PA and more recently of Apache Junction, AZ, passed away peacefully on October 5, 2024, with her faithful canine companion "Banana" and daughter Kelly by her side.

Born in Pittsburgh, PA, to the late Mary Patricia O'Connor and William Francis Zeppuhar, Mary Ellen was a proud alumna of Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy in

Wheeling, WV.

A lifelong learner and dedicated educator, she earned her degree in Linguistics and Modern Foreign Languages (Spanish Language Teacher Education) from Marietta College and went on to achieve multiple advanced degrees, including a Master's in Special Education-Visual Impairments from Eastern Michigan University and a Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling from West Virginia University, where she later completed her Doctorate of Education in Special Education and a Master of Legal Studies.

Mary Ellen dedicated nearly 30 years to the West Virginia School for the Blind as a language arts teacher, and spent 24 additional years as a Professor and Assistant Director at the WVU Center for Excellence in Disabilities. Her unwavering commitment to her students and her advocacy for those with intellectual and physical challenges were central to her life's work. Notably, she was selected as one of 13 citizen members to join the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities under President George W. Bush. Through this role, she honored the sacrifices made by her late parents and sought to ensure that all individuals - regardless of ability - could enjoy the same quality of life.

In her free time, she enjoyed "making memories" with Stephanie, practicing her foreign language skills, researching her ancestry, and engaging with other cultures through travel. She had a passion for trivia, a love of mysteries, and found joy in reading, music, an occasional shot of Irish Whiskey, and all things groovy.

Predeceased by her brother Bill and her beautiful daughter, Stephanie Elizabeth, who inspired her staunch advocacy, Mary Ellen is survived by her daughter Kelly Renee Ayers (Brian Nesbit), her cherished grandson Sloan Nesbit (Bethany Bachman), her brothers John and Jerry, and several beloved nieces, nephews, cousins, sisters in law, and dear friends.

Mary Ellen's legacy of service, education, and advocacy will continue to inspire all who knew her.

Per her wishes, she will be cremated and a celebration of her life held at St. Michael Catholic Church, 1225 National Rd., Wheeling, WV on Saturday, November 2, 2024, at 11:00am with Reverend Carlos L. Melocoton, Jr. as celebrant. The celebration of life will be followed by a graveside service at Mt. Calvary Cemetery where she will be laid to rest next to her daughter Stephanie and her parents.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her honor to Special Olympics, The Innocence Project, or other organization of your choosing that speaks for those without a voice.

SMITH FUNERAL & CREMATION CARE AND SFCC CREMATORY OF WESTOVER, WV (304) 292-9494, is providing compassionate professional services to the family.

Condolences and other gifts of comfort may be offered to the family at www.smithfcc.com.

Send condolences post-gazette.com/gb