



## Carol A. O'Neill

August 24, 1959 - March 7, 2019

Carol A. O'Neill, 59, of Kearney, died on Thursday, March 7, 2019 at her home in Kearney. Memorial Services will be 2:00 p.m., Sunday, March 24, 2019, at the First Baptist Church in Kearney with Pastor Sean Dougherty officiating. Memorials are suggested to First Baptist Church Building Fund or Kearney Tackles Cancer at Good Samaritan Hospital Foundation. There will be no visitation. Although cancer prevented Carol from donating an organ, Carol has donated her body to the Anatomical Board of Nebraska for medical education and research.

Carol Ann O'Neill was born August 24, 1959 in Fort Scott, KS to Rev. John and Orpha (Brenner) Hooge. She was the fourth child—the youngest by seven years—and the only girl. The surprise baby.

Carol grew up in Lincoln, NE, and Gibbon, NE, where she attended elementary and junior high school. She then moved to Sumner, NE, graduating from Sumner High School in 1977. She married PJ O'Neill—her high school sweetheart of seven years—on October 24, 1980. They lived in Hildreth, NE, and Axtell, NE, before moving to Kearney, NE in 1989. Their daughter, Brooke, was born in 1982 and son, David, in 1987.

Carol attended Kearney State College in Kearney, NE, a college selection based on one predominant criterion—PJ was there. She ran on the women's

track team, affectionately known as “Charlie’s Angels,” under Coach Charlie Foster. Carol described herself as a mediocre performer on an incredibly talented and successful team. But Coach Foster, as it turns out, not only recruited high caliber athletes to his team, he also welcomed so-so performers and, like other insightful and truly successful coaches, Coach Foster knew that championship-level performances won championships, but relationships created memories.

Carol chose to study nursing because she wanted “to help others” and graduated from KSC in 1982 with a Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing.

Carol worked as a Registered Nurse at Phelps Memorial Health Center in Holdrege, NE from 1982-1985, and at CHI Health Good Samaritan in Kearney, NE from 1985-2017 in the areas of Dialysis, Employee Health, Human Resources, and the Cancer Center. She retired in June, 2017.

Nursing suited Carol well. She counted it an immense privilege and responsibility to care for others. Her dialysis experience was life-changing. This is where she encountered patients who counted blessings in the midst of really bad chronic disease. It was here that she first recognized the life-saving and life-restoring power of organ donation.

Carol fretted most about work during her sixteen years in recruitment—painfully aware of how shortages impact patient care and stress existing staff. Along with an entourage of other people, she helped hire and welcome who-knows-how-many new employees to Good Sam.

Carol spent her final 6 ½ years of employment in the Good Sam Cancer Center. It was a good fit. As Outreach Coordinator, she educated kids and adults about cancer prevention and detection and, for those already diagnosed with cancer, survivorship. She facilitated the support program “A

Time to Heal,” and advocated for cancer rehab, which helps survivors attain their greatest level of physical and emotional potential.

Carol’s most off-the-wall project was a breast cancer awareness program, aptly named “Take Care of the Girls,” that was published in an oncology journal and presented at a national conference. Her biggest kick came from talking with hundreds of grade school kids in many area schools about Tar Wars, a tobacco-free education program.

Carol deeply appreciated the support and encouragement she received from her own department directors, co-workers, and hospital leadership at Good Sam. When confronted with disputes and controversy, she tried her best to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

Carol served on many hospital committees over the years. When she retired, she was on the Safety Committee, the Good Sam Employee Council, and the statewide CHI Health Employee Relations Council. She received Good Samaritan’s Spirit of Caring Award twice. She was especially tickled to receive the Golden Bedpan Award in 2017 from the UNK Health Science Program in recognition for conducting presentations to health science students over many years. Carol was also appointed by the governor of Nebraska as a member of the Radon Resistant New Construction Task Force in 2017 and was a 2018 recipient of the Kearney Hub Freedom Award in the Medical/Health category.

Carol’s greatest joy was her immediate and extended family, and she especially treasured her role of Nana. She could lose herself in photography, gardening, sewing and crafting, decorating, traveling, dancing (especially to live bands), and a wide variety of music. She was a life-long avid exerciser, wannabe writer, and a selectively-enthusiastic sports fan.

Carol was a member of First Baptist Church, Kearney, NE, where she had served as a Diaconate Board member and currently served as an adult Sunday School teacher and member of the Building Committee. Carol loved the LORD, intently pondered all-things-spiritual, and deeply appreciated her church family, Sunday school class, women's Bible study group, and couples' Bible study group. She felt richly blessed by both her own Baptist heritage and PJ's Catholic tradition.

Carol was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2006 while testing to donate a kidney. The cancer returned in 2016 and again in 2017. She was sustained during joyful times and fortified during rough patches by her faith, family and broad circle of friends. Carol often said with gratitude that her cancer experience was a "we thing," rather than a "me thing." She believed her resilience was fueled by the LORD and others who demonstrated strength in the face of greater struggles.

Survivors include her husband, PJ, of Kearney, NE; daughter Brooke and son-in-law Zac Kavan, of Bellwood, NE; son David and daughter-in-law Michaela O'Neill of Lincoln, NE; granddaughters, Brielle O'Neill, of Lincoln, NE and Laurel Kavan, of Bellwood, NE; step-grandchildren Jaxon Ondracek, and Dirkson and Eastyn Kavan, of Bellwood, NE; brothers John (Claudia) Hooge and Dave (Pat) Hooge of Lawrence, KS; brothers-in-law Tom O'Neill (former spouse Jan) of Lincoln, NE, Tim (Vickie) O'Neill of Lebanon, PA, Dan (Judy) O'Neill of North Platte, NE, Mitch O'Neill of Kearney, NE, and Bill (Jen) O'Neill of Gretna, NE; sister-in-law Colleen O'Neill of Omaha, NE; nieces Jenea (Marc) Havener of Lawrence, KS, Nicole (Scott) Beinstock of Baltimore, MD, Bridgette Vogelsong (fiancée Andy Campbell) of Camp Hill, PA, Camille O'Neill and Olivia O'Neill of Gretna, NE; nephews JD (Betsy) Hooge of Portland, OR, TJ O'Neill (friend Sarah Fitzpatrick) of Washington, DC, Joe (Elizabeth) O'Neill of Washington, DC, Sean (Kelsie) O'Neill of Lincoln, NE, Andrew O'Neill of Lincoln, NE, Patrick O'Neill of North Platte, NE, and Jack O'Neill of Gretna, NE; eight great nieces and four great nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents and oldest brother, Don Hooge.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

MAR **24**. 2:00 PM (CT)

First Baptist Church  
3610 6th Ave.  
Kearney, NE 68845

# Tribute Wall



“ *Carol A. O'Neill*

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January 29, 2023 at 11:14 AM



“ *Dear O'Neill Family: First of all we are so, so sorry for your tremendous loss. We have so many wonderful memories of Carol! She was there for us many many times and always ALWAYS a wonderful help. She was such a classy, beautiful loving, kind, caring Angel On Earth. It was an honor to know her. Her smile just lit up the room when she walked in. She NEVER let out HER troubles and health issues. But concentrated on all others. She was so beautiful inside and out! We miss her so much. Our hearts go out to all of you.*

*Al and Sherone Fielder*

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**Al and Sherone Fielder** - March 24, 2019 at 10:42 AM



“ *Mary and I send our sincere thoughts of love to you, Brooke and David, at this very sad time. Carol was such a special person to everyone she met. The last time I saw Carol, she was more concerned about my well being than her own battles. She had an infectious smile and if I could have seen her "aura", it would have been bright colored and pure. She will be Remembered.*

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**Dr Steve Bennett** - March 22, 2019 at 06:38 PM

TG

“ Just wanted to say what a lovely, kind and joyful person Carol was. I met her at the turtle pool at Good Sam. She welcomed me as if I was a good friend. When she was there she would always say hi. If she had time she would stop and have a nice chat. I miss her and that sweet smile that she had. May God hold you all in his loving arms and give you strength to carry. Sincerely, Tara Gregoski

Tara Gregoski - March 22, 2019 at 12:51 AM

KD

“ Dear PJ, Brooke, David and families,  
Please accept our deepest sympathy and heartfelt thoughts. May God's love give you strength during your time of sorrow.  
Blessings,  
Doug and Karen Demmel

Karen Demmel - March 21, 2019 at 10:20 PM

KK

“ Kerry Gasper, Topeka, Kansas purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Carol A. O'Neill.



Kerry Gasper, Topeka, Kansas - March 19, 2019 at 04:56 PM

BF

“ Carol is a true woman of Faith. I have been moved away from Kearney for 4 years and my time with her at First Baptist was amazing. Such a strong loving woman. My heart aches. I love you Carol! You will always be a part of my heart!!

Brenda Fester - March 18, 2019 at 09:39 PM



“ Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Carol A. O'Neill.



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March 17, 2019 at 06:51 PM



“ PJ, Brooke, David, and family,  
We were so saddened to hear about Carol. Our hearts ache for you. Carol did so much to help others, and she will be remembered for all the good she did. She had such a beautiful smile. We hope you will find some comfort when you share the many happy memories you had. We are thinking of you during this very difficult time.  
Our deepest sympathy,  
Gene and Linda Liebig  
Lynsey, Lesley, and Lauren

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Gene and Linda Liebig - March 17, 2019 at 10:57 AM



“ I was one of many nurses Carol hired at Good Sam. She was always a bright light. Prayers PJ & family!  
LeAnne (Stubbs) Larson

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LeAnne Larson - March 16, 2019 at 10:15 PM



“ Such a very kind lady. She spoke to my students at HMS about her career as a nurse several times and then I got to work with her when I was diagnosed with cancer. I always remember her smile!  
My sympathies to PJ and the family. Judy Fisher and Family

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Judy Fisher - March 16, 2019 at 01:26 PM

KH

“ I am so very blessed to have worked with Carol at Good Sam in coordination with the Breast Center. Her love of our patients and her teammates were limitless.

Kelly Heard - March 15, 2019 at 05:42 PM

PA

“ The John Abrahamson family of Axtell extends deepest sympathy for your great loss. Carol was beautiful inside and out. Patty Abrahamson

Patty Abrahamson - March 15, 2019 at 01:50 PM

EG

“ Eryn Knecht and Brian Gibson purchased the Spirit - Memorial Globe Candle Holder for the family of Carol A. O'Neill.



Eryn Knecht and Brian Gibson - March 13, 2019 at 02:25 PM

JH

“ PJ, Brooke, David and families,  
Was saddened to read Carol's long fight is over. She had an amazing spirit that will be missed all over Kearney. I was happy that she got to enjoy the new church that she started working on so long ago, and know she'll be rejoicing seeing everyone gathered there.

All our love, Mike, Jody, Jennifer, Heather, Sarah and Molly Heeney

Jody Heeney - March 13, 2019 at 01:43 PM

RC

“ I had the extremely good fortune to benefit from knowing and working with Carol...or CO...many Carol's where we worked. Professionally I knew her as a nurse that helped recruit and care for our Good Samaritan team and I knew her as a caregiver/educator in the Cancer Center. Personally, I knew her as someone that cared about me, my family and my well-being. I knew her as a person that through a selfless act of donating an organ found a life altering illness. I don't recall seeing Carol retreat or feel sorry for herself, she channeled that energy into a career change to help others through awareness, to get cancer screening, education, medical care and comfort. Carol was not ok with the status quo, she pushed...hard...made change happen. I appreciated her very much and will not forget the positive additions she made in my character. Thank you for that Carol. PJ and family, thank you for sharing her with so many others, I am truly sorry for your loss but extremely happy for having known you and Carol. rob

Rob Cunningham - March 13, 2019 at 01:01 PM

JR

My sympathies and prayers to you PJ and family. Carol was a treasured light in my time at GSH. She was the first person I met when I came and it assured me I'd made a great choice.

Janet Riese - March 15, 2019 at 12:28 AM

NH

Please accept our sympathy in your loss. Carol was truly "one of a kind." I got to know her when she would be at career fairs recruiting Midland students when I was chair of the program. I then learned that my mother, Ruth Harms, had oriented Carol for one of her first nursing positions. Carol's smile and optimistic attitude was contagious. She will truly be missed but it is good to know that she will be at peace in her Heavenly home. Our thoughts and prayers are with you. Nancy Harms (chair emerita of nursing at Midland University) and Gerhart Wehrbein

Nancy Harms - March 16, 2019 at 05:27 PM



“ So sorry for your loss. My thoughts and prayers are with all of you during this sad time. Treasure all of the great memories you have. Nancy Pfannenstein



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**Nancy Pfannenstein** - March 13, 2019 at 10:47 AM



“ My heart breaks for you, P,J, and your family. Carol was a beautiful woman, inside and out. I was glad she was in my life. Prayers and good thoughts as you grieve.

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**Mary** - March 13, 2019 at 10:40 AM



“ To the family of Carol O'Neill, Thank you for sharing Carol with us for so many years, as we felt she was a great family member to us at Good Samaritan Hospital! Connie Kulwicki

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**Connie Kulwicki** - March 12, 2019 at 03:34 PM



“ PJ, I worked with you at Eakes and can't remember if that is when I met Carol or if it was when I worked at Good Sam. I think she was in Human Resources at that time. Lately I would see her when she came in to KGFW to talk on the air. That is where I work now. I loved her. She was so nice. I am so sorry for your loss.

*Monica Kindsfater*

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**Monica Kindsfater** - March 12, 2019 at 10:27 AM

TC

“ PJ family  
I am so sorry to hear of Carol's passing. I pray  
God will comfort you during this difficult time.

Theresa Childers (Potter)

Theresa M. CHILDERS - March 11, 2019 at 11:00 PM



K2

“ Kearney Catholic High School Class of 2001  
purchased the Peace Eternal Wreath for the  
family of Carol A. O'Neill.

Kearney Catholic High School Class of 2001 - March 11, 2019  
at 10:40 PM



PT

“ Carol was a college roommate at Kearney  
State. Although we were not roommates for  
very long, she was a beautiful person with a  
beautiful heart. I was very sad to hear this  
news. I knew she had cancer but didn't know  
it had relapsed. Prayers for her family. There will be a great loss.

Pam Trampe - March 11, 2019 at 07:18 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of  
Carol A. O'Neill.

March 11, 2019 at 03:10 PM



MI

“ You were the reason I became a living organ donor. Rest In Peace, Carol.  
*Michelle Jack, Hastings*

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**Michelle** - March 11, 2019 at 11:50 AM

SH

*Carol, your life touched me in so many ways. Thank you.*

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**Shirley** - March 11, 2019 at 04:54 PM



“ *Divine Light was purchased for the family of Carol A. O'Neill.*



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March 11, 2019 at 09:24 AM

MA

“ *Many times through nursing I had the lovely opportunity to encounter Carol, always gracious and serene and kind. It was a pleasure knowing her. I wish her family peace and fond memories for such a wonderful woman. Marcy*

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**Marcy** - March 09, 2019 at 01:23 PM