



Jolene F. Ward

December 6, 1940 - September 15, 2023

Jolene F. Ward, 82, of Kearney, passed away peacefully on Friday, September 15, 2023 at Brookestone Gardens in Kearney. A Celebration of Life will be held from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM on Saturday, March 9th, 2024, at the Holiday Inn, 110 2nd Avenue, in Kearney. Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl Funeral and Cremation Services are in charge of arrangements.

Jolene Faye (Spohn) Ward was born in rural Elmwood, Nebraska on December 6, 1940, the second daughter of C. Lamoyne and Laree C. Spohn. Her childhood on the family dairy farm east of town gave her an appreciation of agriculture and later, inspired a collection of Holstein tchotchkes. She excelled in school, sang with her sister at the Elmwood EUB church, and enjoyed 4-H at county and state levels.

After graduating in 1958 from Elmwood High School, Jolene enrolled at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, living on East Campus in Fedde Hall. It was there that she met a soil science major three years her senior who became her lifelong partner March 10, 1960. Jolene put her career aspirations on hold to become a wife to Raymond and mother to four children. The family relocated to Brookings, SD for Ray's post-graduate studies then to Redfield, SD, Stillwater, OK and Dodge City, KS. In 1983, Jolene and Ray selected Kearney, NE as the location of their own business. As co-founder, she worked alongside Ray as Ward Laboratories, Inc. got off the ground. Jolene was the all-around support staff, receptionist, coffee-brewer, and customer service representative. She officially retired in mid-'90s but never stopped promoting

the business.

As her children grew, she took on part-time jobs as varied as packing for a moving company and high school receptionist. She instilled in the family the importance of service to the community as a 4-H leader, band booster, and church volunteer. In Kearney, the list of organizations touched by her spirit of generous giving includes CHI Health Good Samaritan Hospital, Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce Envoys, Daughters of the Nile, First United Methodist Church, Gateway Farm Expo and Kearney Kiwanis Club. Jolene's involvement in Kiwanis International extended to the position of Lt. Governor of Nebraska-Iowa Division 24 in 2010. She also enjoyed being a member of the Friends of the (Nebraska) Governor's Residence.

Jolene proudly completed a Bachelor of Arts degree from Kearney State College in 1987. Her love of history and travel were evident, and she reveled in solo trips to Boston and San Francisco. Kiwanis and Ward Laboratories both offered opportunities to travel the world; highlights include trips to China, New Zealand, Taiwan, South Africa, Brazil, Paraguay, and many European countries including twice to Ukraine.

Perhaps her most rewarding moments were those spent as mom, grandma and great grandmother. She was fiercely proud of her family and never failed to brag about the careers, education or school activities of each "Ward kid." She leaves behind a legacy of love and learning, having never met a stranger, and always sharing her good humor.

Jolene is survived by her husband, Ray, of Kearney, Nebraska; sons Mark (LuAnn), Wamego, KS and Tim (Teresa), Sioux Falls, SD; daughters Karolyn (Alan) Michalewicz, Meeker, CO, and Kristin (Scott) Camp, Omaha, NE; grandchildren Nick (Brooke) Ward, Kearney, NE; Tyler (Monica) Ward, Wamego, KS; Chelsie (Brandon) Kopf, Lexington, NE; Lauren Michalewicz (Tamoi Taylor), Denver, CO; Joe (Emily) Michalewicz, Grand Junction, CO; Karli (David) Toft, Lincoln, NE and Clark Ward, St. Paul, MN; and great grandchildren Allie, Maggie, Bailee and Charlee Ward; Kitra and Kree Ward; Walter and Raye Kopf; and baby Michalewicz arriving in January.

The family wishes to thank the staff of Brookestone Gardens, Kearney, NE, for their devoted care of Jolene as she battled Parkinson's disease over the last three years.

Memorials may be directed to the Kearney Area YMCA (<https://kearneyymca.org/give-back/>) or the Nebraska 4-H Foundation (<https://www.ne4hfoundation.org/give-to-4-h/>)

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAR 9. 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM (CT)

Holiday Inn
110 2nd Avenue
Kearney, NE 68847