



Lonny F. Polacek

September 27, 1957 - August 31, 2025

Lonny F. Polacek, age 67 of Kearney, died on Sunday, August 31, 2025 at his home in Kearney. Celebration of Life services will be on Sunday, September 14, 2025 at 3:30 p.m. at the Gail and Michael Yanney Pavilion in Kearney. Casual dress please, no need for black or formal wear. Following the ceremony, a light meal will be provided and friends/family are invited to walk through the beautiful Yanney Gardens and/or bring a fishing rod and catch a fish in memory of Lonny. In lieu of flowers, memorials are suggested to the University of Nebraska Foundation, Loper Athletic Club - Track. https://fundraise.nufoundation.org/give/480695/*!/donation/checkout#!/donation/checkout Please visit www.hlmkfuneral.com to leave a message or condolence. Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl Funeral and Cremation Service is in charge of arrangements.

Lonny Polacek grew up in Prague, NE to parents Frank and Margie Polacek and siblings Linda, Laura, and Larry. There, he learned to love the outdoors and sports, especially track and field. He met his wife Shawn in high school. They attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and were married in 1979.

He graduated from UNL with a BS in Education and took his first teaching / coaching position in Newcastle, NE. There he earned a Masters of Science in Education. In addition to teaching, he coached girls basketball and track and field. His teams won 3 NSAA Runner-Up trophies in track and field and 1

NSAA Runner-Up trophy in basketball. He had numerous state qualifiers and state champions in track and field. They excelled and won many conference and district meets.

He left Newcastle and moved to Holdrege, NE to become Assistant Principal and Activities Director at Holdrege High School. While at Holdrege, he obtained his national accreditation as a National Certified Athletic Administrator. His final move was to get back into the classroom taking a teaching position at Horizon Middle School where he retired in 2012.

When he retired from teaching, he was contacted by the University of Nebraska-Kearney to coach the pole vault and high jump. In his 15 years at UNK, he became a highly respected and nationally known coach with school records in women's pole vault and men's high jump, 10 conference champions, 36 national qualifiers, 18 All-Americans, 1 NCAA D-II Runner-Up, and a 7th place finisher at the USA Track and Field Championships.

He retired in May 2025 to spend more time with his wife Shawn and their grandchildren: Kennedy, Drake, and Eliza. He planned to coach with his son Nate in the spring of 2026 at Kearney High School.

Lonny loved three things: his family, fishing, and coaching. He loved talking to people, took time to get to know them, and really listened to them. Wherever he went, he seemed to know someone, or he easily made a friend. Then he'd be off to a pond, lake, river, or ocean to fish. He loved the quiet and beauty of the outdoors. His favorite vacations were with his family and his fishing rod; throw in a hike or two to spot wildlife and he was in heaven.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life Service

SEP **14.** 3:30 PM (CT)

Gail & Michael Yanney Pavilion at Yanney Park
2022 West 11th Street
Kearney, NE 68845

Tribute Wall

JC

“ Nate,

Our deepest condolences to you and your family during this difficult time. Your father was an outstanding mentor to many athletes in the Kearney community and beyond and will be deeply missed.

*May peace be with you.
Jesse & Kinleigh Coffman*

Jesse Coffman - September 10, 2025 at 10:07 AM

RS

“ *Sorry to hear of Lonny's passing. Lots of memories of our time teaching and coaching together in Newcastle. Prayers to you and your family*

Rob Simpson - September 07, 2025 at 10:44 PM

DK

“ *Our deepest sympathy to Shawn and family at this difficult time. My brother Len and Lonny became fast friends after Shawn and Lonny arrived in Newcastle and they even shared their birthday....Rest in peace Lonny.*



Dan & Deb Krause - September 06, 2025 at 06:28 PM

JG

“ I met Lonnie coaching at UNK. A great guy, glad I got to know him and so sorry for your family’s loss. We just saw him at the library a couple weeks ago and had a great conversation . Will be thinking of you all.

John Gumb - September 05, 2025 at 03:11 PM

TV

“ May the peace and comfort that only Jesus can provide blanket you at this difficult time of loss. We have fond memories of him at HHS. May you be uplifted by the outpouring of memories and comforting words. Prayers for you in your grief. Todd and Carrie Veal

Todd and Carrie Veal - September 04, 2025 at 09:28 AM

MM

“ Ron & Mary Macomber

Absolutely shocked to hear of Lonny’s passing.

We were also teaching in Newcastle when Lonny & Shawn began their teaching careers there. I have fond memories of both of them & the enthusiasm they brought to our school system. At teacher get togethers after sporting events Lonny was always such fun to be around. After we both moved to South Sioux we spent a year traveling to Newcastle together & the fun continued!

Though we had lost touch over years we have many fond memories of the times spent together in Newcastle. Our thoughts & prayers are with Shawn & his family during this difficult time. 🙏❤️

Mary Macomber - September 03, 2025 at 10:19 PM

BH

“ Lon was my 1st cousin, his mom Margie being my dad's sister. Growing up in Prague, and living in town, he took me everywhere when I was young. My youth was so much more adventurous because he took me along, never minding I was just a kid. Fishing in the creek was a regularly activity, seining also for bait to take to No Mans Land. Sports was also a mainstay of the day, wiffle ball, football, basketball even a little golf was played. Lon had a big heart and I benefitted from it more times than I can remember. RIP.

Bob Hampl - September 03, 2025 at 10:04 PM

TC

“ I had the privilege of being coached by Lonny. He was a great teacher and coach. My prayers are with Shawn and his family.

Tammi Crowther - September 03, 2025 at 05:49 PM

MS

“ My heart goes out to all of Lonny's family and friends. I worked with Lonny at the UNK Athletic Department. Whenever he came into the office he always stopped to say hi. Prayers for all of you during this difficult time.

Michelle Smidt - September 03, 2025 at 10:23 AM

PS

“ So sorry for the loss of Lonnie. I truly enjoyed working with him in the Castle. Also-a very good coach to many including my own children. God Bless. Pat Sedivy

Pat Sedivy - September 02, 2025 at 08:38 PM

BH

“ *Shawn, I am so sorry for your loss. You are in my thoughts and prayers.*

Barb (Bartek) Hothan

Barb (Bartek) Hothan - September 02, 2025 at 07:33 PM

DN

“ *So sorry to hear of the passing of Lonnie. My brother and I grew up with Lonnie and his brother Larry in Prague High School. Played sports with Lonnie and a group of friends everyday growing up in Prague. We loved playing the sport of the season from morning to dusk. Played all sports together in high school as Lonnie was one grade behind my brother and I. That small group of friends went on to college and became teachers and coaches as we had always dreamed of being. I also spent a great deal of time with Lonnie's brother and his dad Frank always had time to take us to high school sporting events as we were growing up.*

I lost contact with Lonnie after college graduation but always followed his teams as he coached in various parts of state. I truly lost a childhood friend on played a big part in shaping my love for teaching and coaching. Lonnie was a bright, hard working and passionate person. My thoughts and prayers go out to Lonnie and his family. I know God will be with Lonnie and his family and I know he led a life we need to remember a celebrate.

Dan Novak - September 02, 2025 at 03:15 PM

TH

“ Lonny was a great human being, and I was lucky to count him as a friend. We met coaching against one another, but Lonny always supported me, and helped me whenever he knew I need it. A week ago, he texted me to check on my and see how my kids were doing. I will miss talking to him about track and field, fishing, and family. I am forever in debt to Lonny for his friendship and support over the past few years. There won't be a day that I go fishing or hiking that I won't think of him and the lessons he taught me by simply being in my life. He is a prime example of someone who followed the Golden rule and I imagine many of his athletes have had their lives greatly impacted by him.

Ty Haas - September 02, 2025 at 02:31 PM

CM

“ We have so many wonderful memories of Lonny's contributions to "Life in the 'Castle." I could always count on his sage advice when my activities needed guidance, not to mention when my own kids needed the same. Coach, AD, mentor, friend. The ways he touched us all have ripples in the sea of time as well as in our lives. I was proud to watch you all in your amazing lives in Kearney as you continued the work started in Newcastle. May you be strengthened by your love. To share the old adage, Grief is the price we pay for love. Please add my love to your list.

Celia McGill - September 02, 2025 at 01:54 PM

KE

Lonny was my basketball and track coach as well as biology teacher in Newcastle. He and Shawn made a huge impact in my life in high school and also while I was in college for which I am very grateful for. Shawn, my prayers are with you and your family.

Kelli Thomas Evans - September 07, 2025 at 09:56 AM

WS

My deepest sympathies to you and your family, Shawn. Grateful you and Lonny were blessed with precious grandchildren, and many years of travel adventures and retirement together. You are all in my thoughts and prayers.

Wendy Sudbeck - September 12, 2025 at 07:30 AM

MB

Our deepest sympathy to Shawn and the family. We taught together in Newcastle. Many fond memories!

Marilyn Bender

Marilyn Bender - September 16, 2025 at 05:59 PM