



Richard M. Kipena

January 23, 1988 - January 22, 2024

Richard Mariano Kipena, age 35, of Kearney, Nebraska, passed away on Monday, January 22, 2024 at the Kearney Regional Medical Center. There will be a viewing on Monday, January 29, 2024 from 5:00 pm-7:00 pm at Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl Funeral and Cremation Services. A Celebration of Life will be Tuesday January 30, 2024 at 10:30 am at Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl Funeral and Cremation Services, with a reception of remembrance to follow at The Chicken Coop in Kearney. Please visit www.hlmkfuneral.com to leave a tribute or message of condolence. Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl Funeral and Cremation Services of Kearney is overseeing arrangements.

Richard was born on January 23, 1988, to Gary and Dory (Mariano) Kipena in Subic Bay, Philippines. Richard spent his youth in the Black Hills of South Dakota. He attended Central High School in Rapid City, SD, and graduated at the top of his class in 2006. Richard went on to seek higher education at South Dakota State University in Brookings, SD where he earned a bachelor's degree in medical microbiology and clinical laboratory science. He was united in marriage to Trevor Sterkel on November 17, 2013, in Sioux City, IA. Richard was a long-time employee at Kearney Regional Medical Center in the Laboratory Department as a Medical Technologist.

Richard developed a passion for music early in his life, he spent his youth singing with the Rapid City Children's Choir and was part of many other choir

groups throughout the years. His voice was enjoyed by friends and family. Singing brought him happiness and Karaoke was one of his favorite pass time hobbies. He loved spending time with friends and family whether it was watching movies or playing video games. Richard was a caring, thoughtful, and selfless person, and it was shown through quality time and sincere conversations. Richard was someone who was always there when a friend or family member needed anything. His genuine character and loving nature will always be remembered.

Richard was heavily involved with Kearney PFLAG, being a local advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. Under the stage name of Sterling Rose, Richard was a founding member of the drag community that thrives in the Tri-Cities today. He helped create the first pride celebration in Kearney that developed into an annual event. His passion and effort helped Black Hills Pride create and refine their festival. Richard displayed his pride for his communities, representing Kearney as Mr. Tri-City Pride 2019 and Lincoln as Star City Pride Events Royalty 2022. During his career as Sterling, he also won the titles of Mr. Gay Nebraska United States 2022 & Mr. Gay Colorado United States 2023. Through these titles, Sterling was able to represent his communities on the national level in Roanoke, Virginia, where he placed in the top 3 each time. Richard's legacy of Sterling Rose lives on through his partner, Treasure Rose, and his drag family, The Rose Garden.

Survivors include: Trevor Sterkel of Kearney NE (Husband), Gary Kipena of Lead SD (Birth Father), Bruce and Dory Kent of Rapid City SD (Father and Mother), and his brothers; Levi and Josh Kent of Rapid City, Mark Kipena of Boulder CO, and numerous drag children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

Memorial Mass for Richard will be at Rapid City Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church on March 16, 2024. His Burial Service to follow at Pine

Lawn Memorial Park, Remembrance gathering to follow Burial Service.

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN **29**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl
2421 Avenue A
Kearney, NE 68847
(308) 237-2259
<https://www.hlmkfuneral.com>

Funeral Service

JAN **30**. 10:30 AM (CT)

Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl
2421 Avenue A
Kearney, NE 68847
(308) 237-2259
<https://www.hlmkfuneral.com>

Tribute Wall



“ 1 file added to the album *Funeral Service*



Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl Funeral and Cremation Services - January 30, 2024 at 02:14 PM

KF

“ Keagan Callahan and Family planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Richard M. Kipena.

Keagan Callahan and Family - January 28, 2024 at 11:20 PM

SC

“ Shiloh C. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Richard M. Kipena.

Shiloh C. - January 28, 2024 at 08:24 PM

KA

“ I was a co-worker of Richard's at KRMC. He was always my go to if I had questions about the lab and different tests. He was always patient and kind. He was always so good with our patients and gave great care with a calm, quiet demeanor. He will be greatly missed.

Kathy Adams - January 25, 2024 at 03:16 PM