



## Pamela Gail Blixt

January 3, 1954 - March 1, 2021

Pam Blixt was a force of nature.

And a force for nature.

In a lifetime of environmental activism, Blixt was instrumental in helping to protect and enhance many of the Twin Cities' signature water resources, including Lake Minnetonka, Minnehaha Creek and the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes.

"She had a passion for protecting the natural resources out there," said Eric Evenson, who worked with Blixt for more than a decade at the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD). "She had this passion for making the world a little bit better place."

Blixt, 67, died March 1 of leukemia. A longtime Minneapolis resident, she had lived in Minnetonka for the past two years.

Blixt's passion for nature was set early. She grew up in Bloomington, part of an outdoorsy family that camped regularly in state parks and national parks across the United States.

"I think that really gave her an appreciation of the beauty and value of wilderness and the need to protect natural resources," said her sister, Janet Blixt of Duluth. "Pam loved the outdoors and was always up for an adventure."

That included white-water kayaking, which she persuaded her dubious sister to try.

"She said, 'You gotta try this,'" Janet Blixt recalled. "And my big sister got me down a lot of rivers."

Appointed as a board member of the MCWD, Blixt served for 24 years, including as president. She served on the Minnesota Clean Water Council from its inception in 2006 and was vice chairwoman at her death.

Blixt was among those who hired Evenson as executive director of the MCWD, a job he served in for 15 years.

"Pam was one of these people that saw the potential of what government can do," he said. "She was always fighting for what she thought was right.

"Pam was thoughtful, pragmatic, forceful. Combined with a really sharp policy mind, she was able to get things done like nobody I've ever seen before.

"She was such a fighter, it's hard for me to accept that this was one battle she couldn't win."

Blixt led many projects to clean up and protect the waters of Twin Cities lakes and streams. But Minnehaha Creek "was always her North Star," Janet Blixt said. "She loved the creek."

Blixt was employed for nearly 20 years by the city of Minneapolis as a public health preparedness manager, retiring in January. She helped the city prepare for major events, such as the Super Bowl and the NCAA basketball Final Four.

When disaster struck, Blixt responded. She helped victims and families after the 2007 collapse of the Interstate 35W bridge over the Mississippi River, and responded when the Drake Hotel in Minneapolis burned in 2019 and left scores of low-income and disabled residents homeless.

Earlier in her career, Blixt helped create one of the state's first adult day-care centers in Hopkins, a place where elderly residents could socialize, have meals and get help with medical needs while allowing them to stay in their homes.

"She was absolutely committed to helping people, and also very much a take-charge type of person," Janet Blixt said. "She was a potent combination of brains, bluntness and a deep and caring heart."

In addition to her sister, Blixt is survived by her longtime partner, Dave Schmidt; brothers Paul Blixt of Mound and Robert Schroeder of Minneapolis; and many nieces and nephews.

No funeral arrangements have been made. A memorial service will be held later this year.

Written by John Reinan originally for the Star Tribune