



Mary Elizabeth Deford

December 1, 1959 - August 17, 2025

After a courageous battle with cancer Mary E DeFord passed away on August 17, 2025, with her sisters and niece by her side.

Mary was born December 1, 1959, in David City NE to Henry "Hank" and Evelyn DeFord. She grew up in Coon Rapids with her two sisters Vicki and Heidi. Mary obtained her BA from Winona State university and went on to obtain a Masters of Education from the University of Wisconsin- River Falls.

Mary was a teacher for almost 40 years before retiring in 2023. Much of her career was spent as a special education teacher with her last several years working as an elementary school teacher at Columbus Elementary School. She is described by many as a master educator and an impactful mentor. She was an amazing advocate for children and families. She was named the favorite teacher by many of her students and undoubtedly made a lasting impact on many lives.

Mary was a devoted mother to her two children Alexa and Steven. She was always there for them and if they ever needed anything she would happily drop what she was doing and come running to do her best to help them. Being their mom was the light of her life and filled her with pride.

Mary loved animals and devoted an enormous amount of time and heart to

animal rescue. She was a cat/dog foster mom for many years and worked closely with a program in the prisons that allowed inmates to train dogs for adoption. Mary believed everyone deserved a second chance and everyone (human or animal) was worth her time and investment of energy. She was a loyal friend who opened her home to several people over the years while they got back on their feet. Mary provided a loving environment where everyone felt supported.

Mary enjoyed reading and was a lifetime learner. She shared a love of gardening with her older sister Vicki. They had lots of plant shopping and garden tour adventures after they both retired. She loved shopping and live music both joys she shared with her younger sister Heidi, even taking Heidi to her first real concert in 1982 to see Rick Springfield at the MN State Fair.

Mary is preceded in death by her loving parents Hank and Evelyn DeFord. Many wonderful pets who crossed the rainbow bridge and her grandparents Pete and Berniece DeFord.

She is survived by her children Alexa DeFord-Mason (Ben), Steven Henry DeFord-Mason (Samantha). Her sisters Vicki DeFord and Heidi DeFord (Vernon). Her niece Feliciana Santiago DeFord and countless friends and chosen family. We are all better for having known and loved her and she will be forever missed.

A celebration of Mary's life will be held on August 28, 2025, at Faith Lutheran Church 1115 Hanson Blvd Coon Rapids with visitation at 10am and 11am memorial service. Luncheon immediately following the service at the Coon Rapids VFW 1919 Coon Rapids Blvd Coon Rapids MN

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG **28**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Faith Lutheran Church - Coon Rapids
11115 Hanson Blvd. NW
Coon Rapids, MN 55433

Memorial Service

AUG **28**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Faith Lutheran Church - Coon Rapids
11115 Hanson Blvd. NW
Coon Rapids, MN 55433

Tribute Wall

TB

“ Tom Brown sent a virtual gift in memory of Mary Elizabeth Deford



Tom Brown - September 04, 2025 at 04:36 AM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Mary Elizabeth Deford.



August 27, 2025 at 03:27 PM

GP

“ Genoa P. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mary Elizabeth Deford.

Genoa P. - August 26, 2025 at 07:41 PM

LZ

“ Love Steve and Barb Zawadski purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Mary Elizabeth Deford.



Love Steve and Barb Zawadski - August 26, 2025 at 03:57 PM

LZ

“ Love Steve and Barb Zawadski planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mary Elizabeth Deford.

Love Steve and Barb Zawadski - August 26, 2025 at 03:57 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Mary Elizabeth Deford.

August 26, 2025 at 01:21 PM

L(

“ Love, Arlene (Mike) and Cindy (Tim) purchased the Fiery Lily and Rose for the family of Mary Elizabeth Deford.



Love, Arlene (Mike) and Cindy (Tim) - August 25, 2025 at 06:41 PM

AR

“ April & Connor Rivers purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Mary Elizabeth Deford.



April & Connor Rivers - August 23, 2025 at 10:48 AM

AR

“ April & Connor Rivers planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mary Elizabeth Deford.

April & Connor Rivers - August 23, 2025 at 10:48 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Mary Elizabeth Deford.



August 22, 2025 at 03:57 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Mary Elizabeth Deford.

August 22, 2025 at 03:57 PM

KH

“ Kyung H. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mary Elizabeth Deford.

Kyung H. - August 21, 2025 at 09:13 PM

CO

“ *Mary and I were college roommates and my life is better because of her. As young college kids, Mary was always the voice of reason, even in college. She kept us grounded while also enjoying herself. We also worked together at Winona KMart and had a code when cute guys walked in. We always had a laugh. Mary was one of the most beautiful people I have ever met. I will always love her and truly miss her.*

Cindy Owen - August 20, 2025 at 09:36 PM