



Susan Kaye Killingbeck

October 12, 2025

Susan Kaye Killingbeck, 17 November 1953 – 12 October 2025

Born Susan Kaye Schmit on 17 November 1953, Susan was one of 10 children raised by Edward and Cecilia Schmit on a small farm in the prairie heartlands of North Dakota. Second from the youngest, Susan attended elementary and high school in Lisbon, ND and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of North Dakota. There she met the love of her life, Keith Killingbeck, who she married in a flood on 5 July 1975. Susan taught high school in East Grand Forks, Minnesota, and biology labs at Kansas State University, before moving to Rhode Island in 1979. There she and Keith were lucky enough to raise two beautiful children (Brent, 1983) and daughter (Laura, 1985). After pursuing genetics research at the University of Rhode Island, Susan continued her teaching career, spending most of it with the age group she loved most: elementary school kids. Following retirement, Susan was a frequent volunteer for a number of organizations and was able to spend much more time in her heaven-on-earth - her garden. No doubt a throwback to her childhood on the family farm, Susan absolutely loved being in her green domain. An extension of that domain was any natural landscape that she could hike or paddle through. Hiking, camping, canoeing, and just being outside were all frequent activities that nourished her soul.

The written word was one of Susan's many special gifts. From her always-

unique Christmas letters to her creative poetry, she had a special way of grabbing the attention, and better yet, the imagination, of anyone lucky enough to have her writings in front of them.

Everyone who ever met Susan was touched by her profound goodness. Even in the darkest days of the Lou Gehrig's Disease that ultimately took her life, she had a smile and a laugh that could immediately melt away countless layers of hardened sadness. Her kind, gentle, caring nature had a soothing quality that wrapped you up in a blanket of love.

Susan is survived by her husband (Keith), son (Brent), daughter (Laura), brothers Edward (Bertha), John, and William Schmit (Amy), sisters Ellen Olmstead (Richard) and Barbara Cameron, sisters-in-law Cheryl Schmit and Chere Schmit, and many nieces, nephews, great nieces and nephews, and cousins.

Susan is also preceded in death by her parents, her sisters Kathleen, in infancy, and Mary Ann Schmit, and her brothers Joseph and Donald.

In lieu of sending flowers, please consider making a donation in Susan's name to the nonprofit food pantry at which she volunteered for many years; the Rhode Island Center Assisting Those In Need (RICAN), P.O Box 73, Carolina, RI 02812 (www.rhodeislandcan.org).

A graveside service will be held at Riverside Cemetery, 169 High Street, Wakefield, RI at 2:00 PM on Sunday 19 October 2025.

In Susan's honor, A Celebration of Life will be held on Sunday 16 November 2025 at a time and place to be named later with an invitation for all to attend. Updated information can be found at <https://laurakillingbeck.com/all-blog-posts/susan-kaye-killingbeck-november-17-1953-october-12-2025>