

Mechelle Christine Dhondt ^{GH-R} 5-20-2021



Mechelle's earthly journey ended due to COVID-19 at Mt. Mercy Hospital in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on May 12, 2021. She was surrounded by family and friends and Jesus Christ, who carried her to His Father's Kingdom.

Mechelle Christine Dhondt was born to Garold J. and Rose B. Hernandez Dhondt on April 8, 1956. She lived on the family farm in Rock Creek Township five miles west of Grinnell, Iowa, until she graduated from high school in 1974. Mechelle excelled in academics and was a talented creative writer, earning recognition for short stories and poetry in high school

and college. Mechelle earned a Bachelor's in History from Mt. Mercy college in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1983 and a Master of Social Work from the University of Iowa in 1993.

Mechelle's career in social work spanned more than 35 years with the Linn County Services for People with Disabilities in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She held progressively advancing roles, culminating her career as CEO, Mental Health/Disability Services of the East Central Region. She was a strong advocate for people with mental disabilities in helping them gain individual independence and rights. Mechelle retired in 2019 spending the last two years of her life in Pueblo, Colorado, where God bestowed the gift of time for her parents, family and friends to spend with Mechelle before she returned to Cedar Rapids in April of 2021.

Mechelle had a joyful smile and unrelentingly positive demeanor that influenced so many people in profound ways. An oracle of advice, she was naturally intuitive and responsive to people and their needs. Testimonials abound about how she lifted people up, helped set them on the right path, motivated them to excel or guided them to reach their potential and beyond. Mechelle was extremely witty. She had a childlike innocence and was joyfully mischievous. She enjoyed bringing understated humor to mundane moments, bringing family and friends to tears of roaring laughter with her amusing anecdotes and observations.

Mechelle was an active member of the New City Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and recently joined Spring Street Christian Church in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

Mechelle is survived by her parents, her best friend Ellen Daye-Williams, her brother Steven Dhondt (Amy), nieces Ellen Dhondt, Grace Dhondt, special niece Aniyah Mae Williams and stepbrothers Todd Neese (Barbara) and Tim Neese (Eric). She was preceded in death by her paternal grandparents Johnnie T. and Helen Young Dhondt, maternal grandparents Candelario and Felipa Marmolejo Hernandez, stepmother Linda Neese, and siblings, John Dhondt and Beatrice Dhondt.

Services will be held on Thursday, June 17, 2021, at New City Church in Cedar Rapids Iowa at 11:30 a.m. with Pastor Paula Garner officiating. Family graveside services will be held on Friday, June 18, 2021, at Hazelwood Cemetery in Grinnell, Iowa at 10:30 a.m. Live streaming video will be available for both events.

To plant a beautiful memorial tree in memory of Mechelle, please visit our Tribute Store on the Smith Funeral Home website.