

Sheila Keller-Powell

April 21, 1956 ~ July 29, 2023

Sheila Keller-Powell completed her last mission on July 29, 2023. Her long battle with Parkinson's disease has come to an end and she is free to fly to the stars she loved so much.

She leaves in her wake, her beloved husband Lee Powell and sweet puppy Lily.

Sheila was born in Salt Lake City on April 21, 1956, daughter of Edward Robert Keller and JoAnn Gingel Keller. As a child, she loved plants, outdoor pursuits and rock and roll. Sheila worked for green houses and learned a lot that would inform her passion for growing things.

In 1977, Sheila graduated from Westminster College in Elementary Education. She was employed by Jordan School District in Salt Lake County. Jordan was the place Sheila would make her mark as an educator. Sheila spent most of her career teaching 6th grade. She loved the curiosity and wild energies of young adolescents. Her students were her life. Sheila loved every day spent in the classroom. In her pursuit of excellent experiences for her students, Sheila became involved in the National Geographic Alliance and became the state director of the Geography Bee. This was a lot of work, which she willingly shouldered to benefit the children of the state of Utah. Geo Queen, as she was called, provided amazing opportunities for the growth and implementation of geographical education in Utah. As a result of her dedication, she was presented with the Jordan School District Outstanding Educator Award in 2004, the O.C. Tanner Contributions Award for Geographical Education and the National Geographic Council for Education Award for Distinguished Teaching. The amount of influence Sheila has had in bringing the world to the children of Utah cannot be overstated.

Besides geography, Sheila's other grand educational passion was Space. Teaching children to reach for the stars was another initiative that she was involved in. Going beyond the text book, Sheila became a founding member of the Christa McAuliffe Space Center in Utah County. As part of the community, she manned missions, helped create portable planetariums for use in classrooms and worked the phones to get funding for the space center. After Sheila's retirement from full time teaching In Jordan School District, Sheila worked part time as Space Center faculty. Among the things she did was the creation of curriculum for teachers in the state, roleplaying for missions in the center's simulator and hobnobbing with the space campers. She loved the opportunities she found as part of the Space Center crew.

Besides Sheila's grand passion for education, she was equally, hopelessly in love with her life partner, Lee Powell. In a whirlwind courtship, Sheila married Lee on December 5, 1980. They spent over 42 years together. Sheila loved

Lee with a deep and fiery constancy that is rare in today's world. Together, they were unstoppable. Lee supported all the projects his best friend and life partner was involved in. He shlepped boxes to Geography Bee's, drove hundreds of miles to take pictures of geographically interesting places in the Intermountain West and endured hours of conversations about teaching, children and curricular pursuits. Theirs was a love for the ages. As Sheila's health failed, Lee was a constant support and nurturing presence. There was nothing he would not do for his "Best Friend".

Sheila's final lesson plan was found in her struggles with cancer and Parkinson's Disease. Sheila was a breast cancer survivor. She faced chemotherapy, radiation and surgery with grace and conviction of her ability to overcome this challenge. And she did, her cancer never returned and she remained cancer free to the end of her life. She was not done yet though. After successfully achieving 5 years cancer free, Sheila was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. This devastating neurological disorder would be the challenge that would eventually claim her life. Ever the teacher, Sheila enrolled in studies and participated in clinical trials. As a result of this she became a founding member of Rock Steady, a Boxing intervention program. She worked out regularly and eventually became a mentor to other Parkinson's patients in the program. Rock Steady gave Sheila far more good years than her doctors anticipated. When at last, her body could no longer sustain her soul, she passed quietly in her beloved home, surrounded by her flowers, animals and beloved husband. As with everything in her life, Sheila was a class act.

Sheila will be remembered for her fierce commitment to excellence, and her big heart. Her flowers, her jam, her center for abused and abandon orchids,her love of creating things and her ability bring almost anything back to life. Sheila loved us all. And we will miss her.

Sheila is survived by her husband, Lee Powell, her stepsons, Matthew Powell (Lisa) Jeremy Powell, Adam Powell (Brandy) their children and grandchildren. Her mother-in-law, Patsy Mitchell. Her brothers Michael Higgins, and Robert Keller, her sisters Lynette Riggs, Paula Nero, Sherry Wieneman and Terry O'Reilly. Her many nieces and nephews will remember Aunt Sheila fondly.

At her request, Sheila's remains will be cremated and interred at the Veterans Cemetery Memorial Park at Camp Williams. A graveside service will be held on Tuesday, August 8, 2023 at 11:00. In lieu of flowers contributions to the Utah Geographic Alliance would be appreciated.