



Mrs. Karen Wicks Helz

March 3, 1947 - May 24, 2016

Karen Helz of Roswell, Georgia, a loving wife, mother, grandmother and friend, passed away on May 24, 2016 at Halcyon Hospice of Atlanta after living with pancreatic cancer for the last two years. She was 69 years old. Karen was born on March, 3, 1947 in Oak Park, Illinois to Constance and Arlein Wicks and grew up in Prairie Village, Kansas.

In 1969, Karen graduated from St. Olaf College (Minnesota), where she met her husband of 47 years, William Helz. They were married on August 31, 1969. Karen went on to earn her master's degree in education from the University of Wisconsin in 1970.

Karen and Bill dedicated their careers to the teaching of English as a second language initially through the Peace Corps in Thailand and subsequently in other countries including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Yemen and the U.S. Personally and professionally, Karen's life was very much focused on the furthering of international peace and understanding.

Karen is survived by her husband, Bill, and their daughters Maya Pack, Kristin Helz and Katrina Helz, sons-in-law Vince Pack and Matthew Delicata and grandsons Jonah Pack and Julian and Elliot Helz Delicata. Karen is also survived by her sister Arlinda Klempin and nieces Serena and Bonnie Klempin.

A memorial service will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Memorial Day, May 30, 2016 at the Northside Chapel at 12050 Crabapple Road, Roswell, Georgia.

The service will be officiated by Rev. Bill Davis of Minneapolis, a long-time friend of the Helz family and husband of Karen's college friend Meredith Davis.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent in Karen's memory to one of the following charities which represent causes with which she felt deeply connected.

International Women's Health Coalition: <https://iwhc.org/>
333 Seventh Avenue 6th Floor
New York, NY 10001 USA

Islamic Relief USA: <http://irusa.org/yemen/>
P.O. Box 22250
Alexandria, VA 22304 USA

Cemetery Details

Northside Chapel Crematory

12050 Crabapple Rd
Roswell, GA 30075

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAY **30**. 10:30 AM (ET)

Northside Chapel Funeral Directors & Crematory
12050 Crabapple Road
Roswell, GA

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Karen Wicks Helz*

October 08, 2022 at 11:37 AM



“ *I had the honor of meeting Karen and Bill during my first teaching job in Doha, Qatar. Both were very hard-working people. They were also good, decent people outside of work as well. My condolences to the Helz family.*

John Wiley

John Wiley - March 03, 2017 at 12:33 PM



“ *I first met Karen and her husband Bill in Saudi Arabia in 1982 when I was an EFL instructor hired by Bill via our mutual alma mater. Then in 2008 I had the honor of supporting Karen's efforts to teach EFL in Bill's Exceed Language Center in Sana'a, Yemen. She was a caring, compassionate instructor as well as a supportive colleague. She'll be sorely missed not only in the teaching profession but also by her friends. My condolences to the Helz family!*
--Bill Heenan

William Heenan - November 04, 2016 at 06:44 PM

SH

“ *My sincere condolences to Bill and to Karen's family for this tragic loss. Karen was one of the kindest people I've been privileged to know, and her life of service both in the Peace Corps and after left many people grateful to have known her, and better for the experience. She will be missed by many people in many places around the world. Stephen Hanchey*

Stephen Hanchey - October 30, 2016 at 11:42 PM

BL

“ *To Karen's Family: I was saddened to hear of Karen's passing. I knew her at Ridgeview, Meadowbrook and SM East Schools. Karen was a good friend to me and a very kind person. I am sorry that I did not get to see her at the 50th reunion. However, I met her and Arlinda at our 45th. It was good to reconnect after so many years. We had a great time sharing memories of KC A's baseball games, school activities, and girl scouts. I got to hear all about Karen's family and travels. What a wonderful life she lived.*

*Memories Hurt, Memories Help, Memories Heal
May your memories offer you comfort.
With sympathy, Betty MacGowan Lavery*

Betty Lavery - June 07, 2016 at 06:13 PM

RE

“ *1 file added to the album New Album Name*



Renata - May 31, 2016 at 08:36 PM

RE

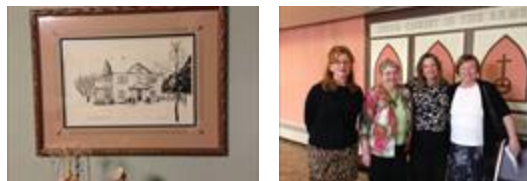
“ I met Karen for the first time at Juniata College. She was my ESL instructor. But that wasn't the only time and place I got to see her. She invited me to her home, made me feel like part of her family. Karen organized a lot of get-togethers for all the student in her class. I remember all the “international” dinners we prepared in her kitchen. My memories don't stop there though. Karen always stayed in touch. She was my inspiration, my mentor, my friend. She had a great sense of humor, was always very positive, hardworking and encouraging. It was a privilege to know her. I miss her very much.

Renata Furman

Renata - May 31, 2016 at 08:29 PM

SW

“ I am Karen's cousin, Solveig. I have so many happy memories of Karen and family get-togethers going back to the time when we were very young and gathered together at Grandma and Grandpa's farm in Jewell for Christmas. We visited the same farm again a year ago when we were in Jewell. It was such a thrill to be in the same home I remembered from our childhood. Growing up it was always such fun to go to Kansas City and get to see Aunt Connie, Uncle Arlein, and Karen, and Arlinda. And after we grew up and had families of our own, we still managed to get together on special occasions. In recent years Karen and I enjoyed sharing stories about our grandchildren. I'm very thankful for Karen's life and extend my sympathy to all her family.



Solveig Walstrom - May 30, 2016 at 05:23 PM

KF

“ Bill came to Doha to establish ELS Language Centers, and I was one of the early students of the center. Bill took me under his wings and mentored me. Bill and Joe McCade helped me in getting acceptance in a university in the USA. Eventually my sister studied in ELS, and my mother took a position with the center. This is how Karen and my mother, Nada, became good friends. The two families had a lot of interactions during the Helz' stay in Doha. With their departure, my mother lost the presence of her good friend Karen, but they had been in touch throughout the years.



In October 2008, I was in Atlanta for a technical training, and I had the chance to visit with Bill and Karen. I am happy I did; it is always wonderful to meet old friends, especially for someone like me who is more expressive in person than in an email or over the phone.

The memories we have had with the Helz' family will always be with us. More often than not, we talk about those days, and we remember an event or comment Bill or Karen made. This is one great friendship, which shows that humans are all the same no matter where they come from.

Karen will be greatly missed, her big smile and the memories she leaves behind will stay for a long, long time.

May God bless her soul for all eternity!

Khaled Farzat on behalf of family - Nada, Mohamad Harb, Ghalia and Salma.

Doha, Qatar

Khaled Farzat - May 30, 2016 at 06:13 AM

GS

“ Karen's entrance into Bill's life was greeted by great joy by his parents, Kathleen and Marty. She was good medicine for the whole Helz family and they loved her like a daughter. Bill's maternal grandmother, Nellie Stebnitz, loved to follow the Bill and Karen travels and Bill's mother, Kathleen, made sure that Grandma Nellie had a large world map for her diningroom wall that highlighted the many countries in which they worked or visited. Kathleen was not shy about pointing out Karen's many wonderful qualities and how she had made her son's life truly happy.

When Maya, the first of three grandchildren came along, it was the best tasting "frosting on the cake" for Kathleen and Marty. In our memories, Kathleen never uttered a disdainful word about Karen. She knew that Karen was capable, intelligent, kind, non-judgemental calm and a patient mother, wife, and teacher.

On this site, we read many of the comments about Karen's abilities and disposition and it should be a comfort to note that she excelled in the living, learning and character growth that we all should aspire to in life.

Karen's grace and acceptance of her illness can be an inspiration to us all. Her journey here on earth is finished and we can be assured that her spirit will live on in the hearts of Bill, Maya, Kristin, Katrina and their families.

We admire the help and outpouring of love for Karen as wife, mother and friend. She didn't have to walk alone and that certainly enhanced and extended her life. It is especially touching that Karen could hold her newborn grandson in her arms and spend precious time with Bill, at home, in the months she had left. We have no doubt that she will be helping others from beyond. We have faith that signs and signals will be provided to those who believe that Karen is sending them.

Georgie and Gary Stebnitz, Madison, WI

georgianna stebnitz - May 29, 2016 at 09:26 PM

MP

So true. And how many women, when their husbands were overseas, would choose their father-in-law to be their Lamaze coach.

MH Perry - May 30, 2016 at 05:44 PM

KM

“*Karen was always so kind and always dedicated to the students. It was an honor to work with Karen during her time at Amana. She will truly be missed.*

Kristen McNeil - May 29, 2016 at 08:03 PM

MP

“*I first saw pictures of Karen the year they married when Martin and Kathleen brought the wedding album to the Thanksgiving dinner that they and my parents always shared. Karen's beauty shone from within and was so true that it needed no alteration. I was glad that she and my cousin Bill—who I thought deserved all and only the best things the world had to offer—had found each other, and very early in life. In the many wedding pictures, they looked like exquisite children, so pure that it seemed they could have walked right back into the Garden of Eden.*

—Marion Helz Perry

M H Perry - May 29, 2016 at 11:19 AM

GF

“ This picture is from my last visit with Mrs. Karen in May of 2011. I was visiting Atlanta for work. Mrs. Karen picked me up from the hotel and we spent Saturday morning together before I headed to the airport. Mrs. Karen was my teacher during my teens in Doha, Qatar. I took several English language courses with her and with Mr. Bill. I always say that many opportunities that I was able to take throughout my life were because of the education I received from them. My mother worked in the same English language center and was a friend of Mrs. Karen. Even though the Helz family left Qatar to start new projects in Yemen and eventually back to the U.S., the friendship between the two families has continued for twenty years. We were lucky that in 2008 Mrs. Karen had a stopover in Doha which gave us the chance for a small reunion. We loved hearing from Mrs. Karen - whether she was checking on our extended family in Syria or sharing stories about the grandchildren that brought her so much joy.

Mrs. Karen will always be remembered as a kind, cheerful, loving friend and teacher.

*Ghalia Farzat and family (Nada, Mohammad Harb, Khaled, Salma)
Doha, Qatar*



Ghalia Farzat - May 29, 2016 at 09:33 AM

KH

“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



kristin helz - May 28, 2016 at 10:38 PM

TS

“Loving Karen has been a close family member, friend, and ESL colleague since 2003. I met Karen in Sana'a, Yemen, as the wife of former boss and my current business partner William D. Helz. Ever since I met her, her smile and high spirits have ceased to depart me.



Karen is a living example of good humanity, exceptional motherhood, dedicated marriage, exemplary teaching and honest friendship. She will always be remembered for her generosity, kind demeanor, sense of humor and great personality.

My family and I were so blessed that our friendship with Karen and William grew over the years. We were fortunate enough to have spent a few nights in their homes - both in Pennsylvania and Atlanta. Karen was so welcoming and courteous every time we made the trip to see both her and William.

Yemen - and Exceed in particular - were always on her mind. She cared so much for what I did at Exceed and always wanted to know how things were in Yemen and Exceed.

Karen, what a terrible loss dear friend. We will miss you greatly and pray that you rest in peace.

*Tareq Abdallah Sabeha
Sanaa', Yemen
Kansas City, Missouri*

Tareq Abdallah Sabeha - May 28, 2016 at 12:10 PM

MD

“ Karen was one of my closest friends. We met in college in 1967 on the "Semester in Thailand"--a mythic 5 months for those who participated --a continual source of stories for those of us who were there and a source of boredom for families and friends who had to listen!

Karen was always Karen--realistic, upbeat, interesting, funny, kind and ready for adventure! If there was a Nobel Prize for "Friendship" Karen would have been the recipient many many times!

Personally, she worked hard to maintain our friendship--she and Bill journeyed to Japan to eat raw fish and sleep on Tatami mats with us, attended far flung reunions in Northfield, Minneapolis and Colorado, shared ridiculous experiences in Southern Spain and dragged her 3 daughters to Topeka for several summers even though they had to put up with our wild "sock fighting" sons! Karen-- I already miss you but hope you're enjoying a new adventure!
Meredith Davis

meredith davis - May 28, 2016 at 10:48 AM

SH

“ *I don't have the words to describe such a wonderful and caring person. Karen had such integrity and character. She told it like it was. She was a fighter. Every time I spoke to her after her illness, she never wanted to talk about herself. She asked how her children at Amana Academy were. She was so dedicated to them and truly cared about each one them. You will be missed my friend!*
Praying comfort and peace over your family!

*With Love and sympathy,
Sherryl Hale*

Sherryl Hale - May 28, 2016 at 07:02 AM

KC

“ Sending our deepest sympathy to you all. We first met Karen, Bill, Maya, Kristin, and Katrina, and Arlinda, Bonnie and Serena, when you all returned to the U.S during the first gulf war, and you all stayed with your grandparents, our dear neighbors, Arlie and Connie. Our memories of Karen over the next 25 years as she returned to Kansas for visits include her jolly laugh, her smile, her always positive attitude of hope and optimism. Karen was so friendly, and we always looked forward to those visits. I knew we were friends for life.

If there's anything we can do for you, just let us know. We are sending you love and sympathy during this difficult time.

*Your friends,
Joel and Karen Chapman*

Karen Chapman - May 27, 2016 at 10:31 AM

CL

“ We LaHurds have very happy memories of our friendship with Karen and her family going back to 1992. How could we ever forget the early morning ride in the family camping van to see the 1992 U.S. presidential election returns in real time! Or the ways Karen helped us negotiate life at Sana'a International School? Or Bill's leadership at YALI? Or the good friend Kristin was to our Kristin—and the many times she was welcomed into your home.

Significantly, you were among the Americans in Sana'a who helped us come to understand and appreciate Yemen and its people and culture.

We are also grateful for the few times we've been able to see some of you in the years since our shared Yemen experience.

We hope your sense of loss is tempered somewhat by knowing what a lasting and positive impact Karen had on so many students and others in so many places in the world. She was truly a peacemaker.

Carol, Ryan, and Kristin LaHurd

Carol LaHurd - May 27, 2016 at 09:46 AM

AC

“ Karen was an amazing ESL instructor, and was a great mentor to me as I started my ESL teaching career at Juniata College so many years ago. I will always remember her kind and generous spirit, her wonderful sense of humor, and her love of Coca Cola. My thoughts are with Bill and their daughters.

Amy Chamberlin - May 27, 2016 at 07:34 AM

RW

“ Dear Maya

It is with great sadness that we learned of your Mother's passing. We are truly sorry.

We met your Mum all those years ago in Jeddah Saudi Arabia and we remember Karen as such a happy down to earth person. RIP Karen Wicks Helz.

Thinking of you and your family during this sad time Maya, we want to say we are

"Wishing you peace to bring comfort, courage to face the days ahead and loving memories to forever hold in your hearts".

*With Deepest Sympathy
from Rita & Walker 🙏
(Turkey/ Scotland). Caroline McLay's parents*

Rita & Walker - May 26, 2016 at 11:19 PM

ZA

“ *I had the pleasure of working side-by-side with Karen. She was witty and very kind. Her dedication and love for her students is unmatched. She loved chocolate and spoiled me with them. I will miss her very much.*

Zeki Abdulahi - May 26, 2016 at 07:27 PM

SK

“ *She was spunky, funny and told it like it was. Always invested 100%*

Stephanie Kumpf - May 26, 2016 at 05:37 PM

RV

“ Karen was an amazing human being, always kind and patient. She loved teaching and as a coworker was always there to lend a hand. She was the embodiment of Amana and the halls of Amana will never be the same without her. Rest in peace, dear Karen.

Roxana Vera - May 26, 2016 at 02:27 PM

CP

“ I met our dear Karen at Juanita College in Huntingdon PA. It was 21 years ago, she was not only my ESL professor, she became my best friend and mother while I was there. Together we did many things, since I was learning English every activity improved my language so we used to go to the supermarket, take her dog out, walking around the campus, being at her house, having pizza on weekends etc etc.

Karen was that kind of person that you continue loving even if you didn't see her for such a long time and that happened to me.

I am really sad because now I know I wont see her again, I will never forget her talking her laugh and the very sweet person she was always to me.

The only thing I hope is that now my friend is able to be near to each person she loved, maybe she can see us, she can feel all our love because even if we didn't see each other for about 21 years, my love and respect to her are the same.

R.I.P dear friend.

Carla Platonoff Vega.

Latacunga, Ecuador- South America

Carla Platonoff - May 26, 2016 at 12:19 PM

ST

“ I went to grade school, junior high, and high school with Karen. She was quiet but always nice to EVERYone. We all were so pleased she made the effort to come to our 50th reunion last Oct. in the Kansas City area. You'd have never known she wasn't well. Weren't we all lucky to have her so long? -- Steve Trainor, SME '65

Those we hold most dear never truly leave us. They live on in the kindness they showed, the comfort they shared, the love they brought into our lives.

To Those I Love and Those Who Love Me

*When I am gone, release me, let me go.
I have so many things to see and do.
You mustn't tie yourself to me with tears,
Be happy that we had the years.
I gave you my love, you can only guess,
How much you gave to me in happiness.
I thank you for the love you have shown,
But now it's time I traveled alone.
So grieve a while for me if grieve you must,
Then let your grief be comforted by trust.
It's only for a while that we must part,
So bless the memories within your heart.
I won't be far away, for life goes on,
So if you need me, call and I will come.
Though you can't see or touch me, I'll be near
And if you listen with your heart, you'll hear
All of my love around you soft and clear.
And then, when you must come this way alone,
I'll greet you with a smile and say, welcome home.*

Steve Trainor - May 26, 2016 at 10:53 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mrs. Karen Wicks Helz.*



May 26, 2016 at 10:49 AM



“ *" Mrs. Karen Helz was one of my best and most kind-hearted teachers. She was the most humble person I have ever known.*



In Yemen, Karen was like a big sister for me and many others. She was a part of many Yemeni people best moments including my wedding. My wife, Egbal Almahatwary, and I will not forget her participation in our wedding. Karen used to bring joy and fun for both students and employees at the Yemen-America Language Institute (YALI). I am not exaggerating if I say that Karen was a walking angel in a human body. I could hear her laughter reading this.

I feel sorry that I was not able to see her before she passed away.

R.I.P my dear Karen. Yemen and many of its people will never forget you."

Hameed Alqatabry - May 26, 2016 at 08:46 AM



“ *I am so sorry for your loss. My kids and I knew her from Amana and I truly appreciated working with her on several projects when I was leading Amana's parent organization. Karen also lived close to us. She will never be forgotten.*

Angelika Otte - May 26, 2016 at 08:32 AM

T3

Indeed a pleasure to work with both Karen and Bill in our summer seminars with our Thai supervisors as we all taught TEFL together in the Peace Corps.

Tom Montgomery (Thai 35) - May 26, 2016 at 10:35 AM

AH

“ *I am so sorry for your loss. My sons attended Amana and I counted Karen as one of my friends. I loved her sense of humor and willingness to laugh! I can hear her laugh even now. I will miss her.*
Allison Hall

allison hall - May 26, 2016 at 07:22 AM



“ *Karen was so kind, smart and amazing. I worked very closely with her for many years and learned so much. I admired her. I would call and talk to her every few weeks since she got sick, and she was always so happy no matter what was going on with her. I will miss her terribly.*

Lori Casal - May 26, 2016 at 06:26 AM

VC

“ *Karen showed me each day at Amana not merely her consummate professional skills , which my 4th and 5th graders so magnificently benefitted from, but her huge heart of a totally dedicated educator. She made a magnificent difference. I will never forget her, always treasuring her example and words of wisdom. And her most delightful and silly humor!! I thank God today for her glorious presence in my life; I look forward to meeting her again with great love in our eternal journies.*

Valerie Mehlig Curry - May 26, 2016 at 05:03 AM

JE

“ *Sami and I adored her. I loved working with her and learned so much as her coteacher, colleague and coach. I always said if I could pick someone is like to go on a cross country road trip, is pick Karen.*

jean-jacques - May 25, 2016 at 10:22 PM

MA

“ *Maya, I am so sorry for your loss. I will always remember your mom as the true educator that she was. She led by example a life of tolerance and understanding, giving her daughters the gift to see a world without borders, a world where I believe she showed to you was within your reach, the ideals and passions she stood for. My sincere condolences to you and your family. I have no doubt that you will remember and pass on her spirit to your children. My prayers are with you to find comfort in the fact that she is now at peace, watching over you.*

maratee - May 25, 2016 at 08:17 PM



“ *She was always so kind and welcoming. I loved going over there after school and the weekends. She just made you feel like you were part of the family. She was caring and she made me smile. I will never forget her and always be grateful for her kindness.*



Marella Dias - May 25, 2016 at 07:15 PM

MA

“ 3 files added to the album *New Album Name*



maya - May 25, 2016 at 06:10 PM

MA

“ 4 files added to the tribute wall



maya - May 25, 2016 at 05:53 PM

MA

“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



maya - May 25, 2016 at 05:39 PM



“ I went to highschool with Maya and spent a lot of time at the Helz's residence in Bangkok, Thailand. Some of my best memories growing up were made there, and it was always a joy to be around Mrs. Helz. She had such a kind, welcoming, and gracious spirit, and was so understanding and patient of our many mishaps and adventures as adolescents. My deepest condolences to her family and may she rest in peace.

Angie Ng - May 25, 2016 at 01:09 PM