



Donna Jean Fiebelkorn

October 20, 1953 - August 2, 2024

Donna Jean Fiebelkorn, passed away on August 2, 2024 at the age of 70. The daughter of the late Lt. Col. John and Tena (Baas) Fiebelkorn, Donna was born in 1953 in Bossier City, LA. She is survived by her daughter Liana Kapan of Grand Rapids; and also her siblings Diana Harris (CA), Amy Warfield (MA) and Karl Fiebelkorn (AZ).

Following her graduation from Michigan State University, Donna began teaching in Maryland but soon embarked on a life's passion of service with the Peace Corps. After volunteering in Nepal, her service transitioned from recruiting volunteers, through various leadership roles in Sri Lanka, the eastern Caribbean, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. Donna once said, "The Peace Corps is woven into who I am...It's in me ... it's the thread of my life." She also called it "the toughest job you'll ever love".

During her seven years in Nepal, a place she lovingly called "Shangri-la", she "gave life" to her daughter, Liana Kalsang Dolkar Fiebelkorn Kaplan. Liana was the love of her life and a constant companion.

Returning stateside in 1991, they returned to Vermont where Donna completed her Master's in Curriculum and Instruction and Doctorate in Education Administration at the University of Vermont (UVM). There she served as a faculty member administering the university's secondary

education programs. She later was appointed as the Dean of Education and Human Service at Baker College in Muskegon. Following that, Donna moved to Lake Superior State University (LSSU) in 2011, to work with the teacher education program. There she retired as Dean of the College of Education and Liberal Arts.

Retired is a bit of a misnomer. Donna's passion for and commitment to education continued as she carried on working with the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District and the State of Michigan Department of Education.

Donna, being the furthest thing from a "boat or water person," was especially proud of the work she was able to contribute to the continued growth of the Great Lakes Boat Building School. It was here that she found a second family amongst her highly esteemed colleagues.

In retirement she did have time to root for Michigan State athletics, especially MSU Women's Basketball and following her favorite television program "Young Sheldon".

Donna was a breath of fresh air in this world. Her curiosity of the world has left an imprint that spans not only states but across the globe. Before joining the Peace Corps she once said "I wanted to know what the world was all about...There's more to the world than just the U.S." We believe she was successful at that and more.

"Wherever you have friends that's your country, and wherever you receive love, that's your home."— Dalai Lama XIV,

There will be a family burial at Evergreen Cemetery in Lake Orion, a Celebration of Life to be scheduled this fall.

In Lieu of flowers donations can be made to AYA Youth Collective, 320 State St SE - Grand Rapids, MI 49503 (ayayouthcollective.org) or Grand Rapids Pit Bull Alliance, Paypal [@grpbafeedingpets](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?username=@grpbafeedingpets).

Anyone wishing to honor Donna's enjoyment of "pushing the envelope," is asked to email a brief statement to the Grand Rapids Fire Department Assistant Chief Borreson (kboresso@grand-rapids.mi.us) requesting the GRFD leadership acknowledge the current mental health crisis amongst first responders and to establish services that will effectively and equitably provide support for the mental well-being of those individuals who have, and continue to, respond to the daily call to duty. Approximately 100 firefighters die each year by suicide. This is equal to approximately 100 firefighters that die each year in the line of duty.

As Submitted By Family

Tribute Wall



Ian
Howe

“ I just read the announcement and my heart dropped. I have so much emotion and so many words crashing into each other. I'm thinking of a woman I met in 1988 or '89 on a flight from Chang Mai to Bangkok because her very young daughter appeared out of nowhere in flight standing next to me. We instantly became friends. I visited their home in Vermont and later in Virginia. Donna became an SME for a college session I taught in 2010. We stayed friends for all of those years, along with Liana. I'm gutted!! My heart, my hugs and my kisses go out to you, Li. Thank you for wondering over on that plane ride, so many years ago in the land of smiles. <3

Ian Howe - January 12, 2025 at 10:15 PM



DC

“ I met Donna when she became my Dean at LSSU, but when we both retired in the same summer, we were free to turn our cordial and collaborative working relationship into a friendship. We met regularly for coffees or lunch and each time passed too quickly with our conversation never faltering. I'm so sad to hear this news, and sad to have lost a friend and mentor. She made a real impact in her world, and will leave a hole behind her.

Dottie Case - August 22, 2024 at 09:19 PM



BK

“ I had the pleasure of working with Donna at LSSU as a faculty member and also as a fellow Dean. She had such a broad experience working with students and developing curriculums. As a fellow Dean, I knew I could always count on Donna for her honest assessments and guidance on critical issues that affected the university. I truly enjoyed working with her. I am so very sorry to hear of her passing. She was a such a good person.

Barb Keller - August 17, 2024 at 10:36 PM

AM

“ 1 file added to the album Share



amy - August 17, 2024 at 09:16 PM

PP

“ I'm heartbroken to hear about the loss of such a kind and generous soul like Donna. It was a privilege to know her even for a few short years. Her passion and support for us students at LSSU inspired us to strive toward the goals she always believed we could reach, even when we weren't as confident. So many of the experiences I had in the Arts Center that molded me into the person I am today wouldn't have been possible without Donna. I hope her loved ones are able to find comfort knowing she left everyone she touched with the best parts of herself ❤️

Paige Parrish - August 17, 2024 at 07:34 PM

SC

Beautiful.

Spencer Christensen - August 19, 2024 at 12:45 AM

MB

“ Donna was my Dean for several years at Lake Superior State University. She is one of the finest administrators I worked with in my fourteen years there as English faculty. Her thoughtfulness, patience, and intelligence were all deeply appreciated. Her world view and respect for difference because of her vast experience with foreign cultures was especially valued. Among many other generous supportive moves, she offered time, financial, and logistical support to LSSU's hosting of the "Writing Across the Peninsula (WAP)" conference for which LSSU received much praise from its participants (from more than twenty colleges and high schools in MI, WI, and Canada). LSSU's hosting was voted top tier, even one-upping the previous hostings by MTU and NMU. Donna's support was critical to this success. Her emotional and intellectual generosity, on so many levels, left LSSU a better place. ~Mary Been

Mary Been - August 17, 2024 at 07:21 PM

SC

“ When Donna hired me at LSSU, I remember telling her, “We’re going to make great things happen here.” She smiled and probably said, “okay”. The four years I spent at Lake State, Donna helped fulfill that bold statement - and we did do great things. Lots of them. None of it could have happened without Donna. My students for those four years would all attest to her dedication, her support of them no matter how they showed up, and much more. She would watch rehearsals, she would come to movie nights, she would ask questions, she would giggle. She would make cookies and offer ideas. She enjoyed so much of the arts at Lake State. She enjoyed interacting with the whole person - not just the student. When I thought I couldn’t make something work, she was there to say, “do it” . Every time I needed her, she was there to help me make it happen. We didn’t win ‘em all, but we had our fair share of successes. Donna cared deeply for the students and she wanted the best for them. She was smart. She was detailed. She was passionate. She will be missed and I will do my best to carry forward the best of Donna in all my work. Much love to her family.
Spencer Christensen

Spencer Christensen - August 16, 2024 at 09:58 PM

MB

I concur with all you said Spencer. She was the loveliest of people. All best thoughts to her family. Mary B.

Mary Been - August 17, 2024 at 07:23 PM

NS

“ Donna was a true advocate for education and students. She was a person who I could trust to bounce ideas off of and she was always open to rigorous discussion. She will be missed by the team at GLBBS.



Nikki Storey - August 13, 2024 at 02:34 PM

LF

“ I retired a few years back from LSSU. Had the pleasure of serving on a committee or two with Donna. Condolences to her family.
Lee Freedman.

Lee Freedman - August 13, 2024 at 01:33 PM

CL

“ I didn't have the opportunity to get to know Donna very well but she seemed like a very special lady. I saw her at the family reunions and enjoyed talking with her. She was such a sweetheart. I really appreciate the hard work that she did on making a family tree for all of us to have and treasure. She did a wonderful job on it. My thoughts and prayers are with all of you.

Claudia "Jean" (Baas) Ludwig - August 13, 2024 at 07:31 AM

JP

I agree with my sister Claudia that Donna was a truly good soul and I was always thankful for the work she put into keeping the family tree updated and the family reunions she helped organize. Her warmth in this family will be missed.

Janet Payne - August 13, 2024 at 03:36 PM

NZ

“ Donna was my program director when I was a peace corps volunteer in Nepal. She was very kind to me. I really was not sure that I could make it in Nepal and she was very important in showing me that I could. She came to my village in Dhankuta and really helped and supported me. She was a very generous and giving person who I came to respect and care for very much. I'm very sorry to hear as out her passing.

Nancy Bilson Ziolkowski - August 11, 2024 at 12:04 AM