



Donna L. Cornellier

March 30, 1945 - October 12, 2024

AYER: Donna Louise Cornellier of Ayer, MA passed away on Saturday October 12, 2024 after a long and courageous battle with Alzheimer's at the age of 79. She was a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, aunt, and friend who brought joy and laughter to all who knew her.

Donna is survived by her husband Charles Edward Cornellier, her two daughters Cathy Pauly (husband Eric), Cindy Testa (husband Brian) and her grandchildren Mackenzie, Thomas & Jonathan Pauly and Lily & Ella Testa. She is also survived by her two brothers-in-law, Terrence Cornellier and Francis Callahan, and her nephews Michael Callahan and Mark Callahan and niece Betsy Amenta. She was predeceased by her parents she was born to, Don and Louise Benz, and June Benz.

While her father served with the Coast Guard, she was born in Cambridge, MA on March 30, 1945. The family returned to the Midwest where Donna spent her childhood in Iowa. She graduated from Ottumwa High School and attended the University of Iowa. Donna returned to the East Coast when she transferred to Boston University where she earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree and began her career as an actuary at John Hancock insurance. She later pursued her Master's in Education at Fitchburg State University.

Donna met her husband of 52 years while teaching at Ayer Jr. High school;

she taught math and Eddie taught science. After they had children, Donna switched gears and was proud to work in adult education. Donna spent many years on Ft. Devens helping English language learners, taught courses with Mt. Wachusett Community college and spent over 15 years working with the Massachusetts Department of Education when she finally retired in 2015. She was very passionate about helping others.

Beyond her professional achievements, Donna valued time spent with family and friends. Her love for her daughters and their friends got her actively involved in many school, athletic, band & girl scout programs. Donna organized and distributed thousands of cases of girl scout cookies out of her garage. She chaperoned band trips to Disney World, Virginia Beach, Niagara Falls and local parades in South Boston and Worcester, MA. Donna led fundraising to ensure everyone had the opportunity to participate in trips; she even brought a circus to town, elephant and all! Class and team events were often held at the house; hundreds of hamburgers and hotdogs were grilled in the backyard over the years.

Donna enjoyed many hobbies including playing bridge & mahjong, golfing, skiing, and traveling near and far. When not on the go, Donna loved to sit and relax on the family shore of Sandy Pond. Known for her strong will and take-charge attitude, there weren't many things Donna wouldn't take on, but she had a genuine soft spot for her closest friends. It didn't take long for the laughter and cackles to fill the room when Donna and her friends gathered. Donna's memory will live on in the stories shared by those fortunate to call her a friend.

We are grateful to the staff at RiverCourt Residences for the love and care Donna received while living there and the support we received during her final days. The staff treated Donna like she was a family member.

The family will receive family and friends on Thursday, October 17, 2024 from 4-7 at the Anderson Funeral Home, 25 Fitchburg Road, (Rte. 2A) Ayer. A memorial service and burial to celebrate Donna's life will be held privately.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial donation to RiverCourt Residences, c/o Donna Cornellier Holiday Fund, 8 West Main Street Groton MA 01450 or the Alzheimer's Association.

Cemetery Details

St. Mary's Cemtery

Bishop Rd.
Ayer, MA

Previous Events

Calling Hours

OCT 17. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Anderson Funeral Home - Ayer
25 Fitchburg Road ~ Route 2A
Ayer, MA 01432
(978) 772-2355

Tribute Wall

DG

“ Donna was like a sister to me as we were almost the same age. We shared many happy hours playing with toys and pets at both houses. She was my favorite first cousin.

Don Gregory

Don Gregory - October 06, 2025 at 03:51 PM

MN

“ Dear family, I just learned about Donna's passing and it breaks my heart. She was such a loving sweet, down to earth person. I worked with her at the department adult education office in many initiatives together. I do remember her celebrations she pulled together at the beautiful home. And all the delicious grilling and cooking you and Donna pulled together together. May our Lord have her in his Kingdom resting in peace. She will be missed and her memories will live on. My prayers are with you all 🙏🙏
Marie Narvaez

Maria M. Narvaez - February 26, 2025 at 05:32 PM

AH

“ 1 file added to the album Donna Louise Cornellier



Anderson funeral home - October 17, 2024 at 10:07 AM

CA

Such a wonderful video. Thinking of you all

Cathia - October 31, 2024 at 01:32 PM

FS

I just found out about Donna's passing. It broke my heart. I worked with her for over 12 years at the Department of Education. She was a great person. Great memories.

Fabio Scarcelli - February 26, 2025 at 12:47 PM

AZ

Echoing others - I just learned of Donna's passing and I am sending peace and condolences to her much-loved family. I work at UMass Amherst but collaborated with Donna through the Massachusetts Department of Education. She was smart and funny and a pleasure to know. I am so sorry for your loss.

April Zenisky - February 26, 2025 at 03:00 PM

LM

“ You are all in my thoughts and prayers. God Bless.
Laurie Morency

Laurie Morency - October 16, 2024 at 10:27 PM

TC

“ Tobe Conway lit a candle in memory of Donna
L. Cornellier



Tobe Conway - October 16, 2024 at 02:51 PM

MH

“ *Ed and family,
I am so very sorry for your loss. Donna taught with me when I started in Ayer so many years ago. She was a tremendous help getting me through those early years. I will be forever thankful. My heart goes out to all of you. You are in my prayers.*

Maggi Hartnett

Maggi Hartnett - October 16, 2024 at 11:27 AM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Donna L. Cornellier.*



October 16, 2024 at 07:39 AM

WN

“ *Aloha Cornellier Family... So sorry to hear of Donna's final run... Will always remember the many ski trips, where we always knew what trail she was on by the wonderful laughs and yells as she flew down the trails!*

Walt Naparstek

Walt Naparstek - October 15, 2024 at 09:07 PM

LB

“ I’m so very sorry to learn of the passing of your mom. I send my deepest condolences to you and Eric, your wonderful children, and to all of your extended family members, who I feel I got to know so well through your FB postings. I loved reading about all the wonderful things your mom accomplished in her life. It’s no wonder that you have such an extraordinary loving, caring and out-going nature, yourself; all wonderful tributes to your Mom. Wishing you comforting memories always. Leslie Bracebridge

Leslie Bracebridge - October 15, 2024 at 01:28 PM

PC

“ Eddie, Cindy & Cathy,
Donna was such a beautiful woman both inside and out. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to get to know her. She was such a big help getting me onto the school committee. And helping the schools in some many ways. Heaven has gained another Angel and we have lost a remarkable woman. God bless you all.
Pat Casavecchia



Patricia Casavecchia - October 15, 2024 at 10:29 AM

SM

Dear Cousins Eddie, Cindy & Catherine, May you feel the presence of peace beyond understanding from our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Donna will live on in your hearts, minds and spirits as you continue on in your journey through life. You are surrounded by God’s Army of Angels and know that you are not alone, but are connected by love and prayers. God bless you always.
Suzanne (Cornellier) Macomber & Family

Suzanne Macomber - October 15, 2024 at 06:30 PM

JR

Eddie and family, I'm so sad to learn of Donna's passing. My parents enjoyed many wonderful times playing bridge and socializing. May she rest in peace. Jeanne (O'Connell) Ray

Jeanne M RAY-Condon - October 19, 2024 at 02:54 PM

RS

*“ I always enjoyed the time i spent with Donna at the family gatherings she made me feel so welcome and i enjoyed our conversations. She had so much to share and I know how much she will be missed.
All my love and prayers of comfort for all of you as you celebrate the life of Donna.*

roslyn sliwa - October 15, 2024 at 12:19 AM

LC

*“ Ed , Cindy and Cathy , Larry and I are sorry to hear of Donna's passing. We have very fond memories .
We send our deepest condolences.
Larry and Deb Cole*

larry and Deb Cole - October 14, 2024 at 08:05 PM

CH

“ Eddie, Cathy and Cindy, where do I begin. It all started at story hour. Then it grew to memories from the cape, skiing, surprise birthday hot air balloon ride and times at the pond with kids and grandkids. We were there for each other through good and bad. She will never be forgotten. She was a true friend.

Carol Horgan - October 14, 2024 at 07:21 PM

GL

“ Eddie and family Pam and I send our deepest condolences to you and your family. Pam and Gary Luca

Gary Luca - October 14, 2024 at 06:55 PM

KM

“ Ed do sorry to hear of Donna's passing. Our prayers are with you and your family

Kathy and Tom McDowell - October 14, 2024 at 06:24 PM



“ Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Donna L. Cornellier.



October 14, 2024 at 03:51 PM

TF

“ The Welch Family(Jim,Liz,Alex,Benjamin) planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Donna L. Cornellier.

The Welch Family(Jim,Liz,Alex,Benjamin) - October 14, 2024 at 03:51 PM

DS

“ Denise Stepleton lit a candle in memory of Donna L. Cornellier



Denise Stepleton - October 14, 2024 at 02:11 PM

DS

Ed, your daughters & all family, My thoughts and prayers are with you all for the loss of your loved one.

Denise Stepleton - October 14, 2024 at 02:18 PM

CP

“ Our condolences on the loss of this wonderful woman. I remember working with her during the Prop 21/2 override for the schools many years ago. She was a force...such a smart and caring woman. Ed, Cathy and Cindy, may the memories sustain and comfort you all during this sad time.

Cindy Millson-Plunkett and Family

Cynthia Kay Plunkett - October 14, 2024 at 01:55 PM

TE

“ Very sorry to be reading this about my 7th grade Math teacher who I'll always fondly remember as "Miss Benz". Please accept my condolences.

Tim Elmer - October 14, 2024 at 11:17 AM

JM

“ Hi Eddy, So sorry to hear the very sad news of Donna's passing. Our prayers are with you and your family. Joyce and Tony

Joyce and Tony McGuane - October 14, 2024 at 10:25 AM

SW

*Ed, Cindy and Cathy—I'm so sorry to hear about the loss of your beloved Donna. She was a lovely woman. My sincerest of sympathies.
—Sharon Webb*

Sharon Webb - October 16, 2024 at 08:58 PM



Ed, Cindy and Cathy—I'm so sorry to hear of the loss of your beloved Donna. She was a lovely woman. My sincerest of sympathies. — Sharon Webb

Sharon Webb - October 16, 2024 at 09:00 PM