



Karen June Bradford Stipes

June 15, 1940 - March 9, 2025

The passing of Karen June Bradford Stipes (b. June 15, 1940) on March 9, 2025 brings to closure a long, loving and impactful Christian life devoted to family, service, and faith. She leaves behind a legacy of compassion, having nurtured a large family of 4 children, 14 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren with her best friend and husband of 63 years, Jay Stipes. From the beginning of her life, Karen exemplified the calling of the Lord in James 2:26 to “put feet to your faith” as demonstrated by her lifelong and tireless pursuit to serve others.

Born in Ritchie County, WV, Karen grew up in Morgantown, WV, where she attended high school before earning a Board of Governors scholarship to West Virginia University. At WVU, she graduated summa cum laude with a B.S. in library science and met her husband, Jay.

Throughout her life, Karen was deeply committed to mental health advocacy. In their early marriage while Jay was in the doctoral program at North Carolina State University, Karen founded the North Carolina School of Psychiatry Medical Library at Dorothea Dix Hospital and worked with psychiatric resident physicians in training. Following Jay’s graduation, they moved to Delaware where Karen became actively involved in the local mental health association. In 1967, the family moved to Blacksburg, Virginia where Karen became the President of the Montgomery County Mental Health Association. Shortly

thereafter she was elected President of the Virginia Mental Health Association, enlisting the support of Governors Robb and Dalton to promote mental health initiatives. Her leadership extended to the national level when she became Vice President of the National Mental Health Association, where she enlisted the sponsorship and worked closely with Elizabeth Warner Taylor and Joe Theisman to bring national awareness to the unique challenges faced by individuals with mental illness. In recognition of her service, Karen was named the Roanoke Times "Woman of the Year" in 1981. She was relentless in her work in promoting mental health and numerous other programs for the needy and suffering.

Karen's professional career and service were deeply intertwined. A beloved librarian at Blacksburg High School, she fostered a love of learning and reading among her students for over a decade. While earning her Master's Degree in Education at Virginia Tech, Karen developed an art and mental health program for Gilbert Linkous Elementary School. Her thesis, "I'm Thumbbody," was designed to build self-esteem in children from an early age. Thereafter, Karen continued her education in the pursuit of her doctorate at Virginia Tech.

When it came to Karen's service, there was no stone left unturned. Following the Vietnam War, Karen opened their home to a group of Vietnamese boat refugees escaping persecution, supporting them through transition to US citizenship. After she retired, she was an active participant in the missionary work in Central Brazil, serving on an Amazon medical boat through Belmont Christian Church. Karen's passion for service was a family affair. Whether enlisting the assistance of her children to support mental health initiatives, welcoming refugees into their home, or embarking on missions abroad with her children and grandchildren, she modeled a spirit of love and unabated generosity in all that she did.

One of Karen and Jay's favorite activities was serving as docents for many

years at President Hoover's Rapidan Camp. Karen became an authority of the Hoovers and their personal benevolent and philanthropic work and she educated thousands of hikers who visited the camp. Karen and Jay also enjoyed the time spent together researching tree diseases across the U.S. and Western Europe for many decades of their marriage. A lifelong learner, Karen developed a love for family genealogy and persistently researched the histories of the Bradfords, Haymonds, and allied clans compiling valuable information to be shared with generations to come. Her ancestral grandfather, William Haymond, wrote the Constitution for the newly formed state of West Virginia in 1863.

Karen was predeceased by her parents, Jennings C. and Elinor Haymond Bradford, as well as her brothers, Carl and Larry and her sister, Janeen. She is survived by her husband, Roland Jay, and their four children: Bradford Jay (Michele), Shannon Dixon (Steve), Leah Hughes (Don), Craig Andrew (Ashley) and brother Randy Bradford and sisters-in-law Judy Bradford and Rita Bradford and many beloved nieces and nephews. She was also the beloved "Nanny" to 14 grandchildren: Caitlyn Dixon, Macie Wall (JC), Conner Altman (Drew), Benjamin Stipes (Stephanie), Ethan Hughes, Sam Hughes, Mollie Hughes, Ahri Hughes, Caleb Stipes, Drew Stipes, Harper Stipes, Trevor Cregger, Austin Cregger and Emma Stipes, as well as two great-grandchildren, Sofia Altman and James Jay Stipes. Additionally, she is also survived by five "adopted" sons, Ben Poe, Dan Kelly, Brandon Craig, Adam Hileman and Quintin Burch.

Though Karen's faith has now become sight, the love and devotion she poured into her family and community continues to shine through the many lives she touched, and she leaves behind a lasting spirit of generosity and love that her family will forever cherish.

In lieu of flowers, it was Karen's wish that donations be made to Blue Ridge

Christian Camp, 1751 Sterling Drive, Blacksburg, VA 24060.

Funeral Services will be conducted Friday, March 14, 2025, at 1:00 pm in the Belmont Christian Church, 1500 Peppers Ferry Rd. NW, Christiansburg, Virginia 24073. A private family burial will follow the service. The family will receive friends on Friday, March 14, 2025, at Belmont Christian Church from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 14. 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM (ET)

Belmont Christian Church
1500 Peppers Ferry Road NW
Christiansburg, VA 24073

Funeral Service

MAR 14. 1:00 PM (ET)

Belmont Christian Church
1500 Peppers Ferry Road NW
Christiansburg, VA 24073

Tribute Wall

CA

“ I am so sad to see this post. Karen and I were friends when I worked at the Mental Health Association. She taught me so much and helped me through some really tough times. Thinking of you Jay and your children. May she rest in peace.

Carol Jensen Altizer - October 17, 2025 at 07:06 PM

BU

“ My condolences to the family. My wife, Jenny, and I, Brad, were in the same church 1983-1986. Beautiful person who was always so kind and set a wonderful example to my wife and I. Her husband Jay was my mentor at VT.

Brad L Upham - October 14, 2025 at 04:01 PM

DM

“ I didn't know Karen but I new Leah and my Dad I believe made music with Jay. From Knowing Leah they did a bang up job of raising their family. The family will be in my prayers

David Mellichamp - March 31, 2025 at 03:40 PM

SB

“ I am writing to offer my sincere condolences to the family. I am very grateful for the emotional support Dr. And Mrs. Stipes provided me as a student at Virginia Tech and beyond. I hope God will comfort the family!



Stephanye Bauer - March 22, 2025 at 02:53 AM

MW

“ I was sorry to learn of Karen's passing. Jay, you and your family are in my thoughts and prayers. God bless and comfort you as you walk forward without her. Mark Windham

Mark Windham - March 15, 2025 at 03:55 PM

CC

“ Stipes family, I always knew Mrs Stipes was a special lady but I learned so much more about her from this tribute to her life. What a beautiful life well lived! I know she is basking in the love of her savior but my prayers for comfort are with each of you as you mourn and will miss her. My love to the family during this time-Crista Creedle (Rob Jones' sister)

Crista Creedle - March 15, 2025 at 09:12 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.



March 13, 2025 at 01:52 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Karen June Bradford Stipes.

March 13, 2025 at 01:52 PM



“ Gracious Lavender Basket was purchased for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.



March 13, 2025 at 01:39 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Karen June Bradford Stipes.

March 13, 2025 at 01:39 PM



“ Rita and Zach Bradford and family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Karen June Bradford Stipes.

Rita and Zach Bradford and family - March 13, 2025 at 08:54 AM



“ Rita and Zach Bradford and family purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.



Rita and Zach Bradford and family - March 13, 2025 at 08:54 AM

XP

“ XO- Lisa, Phil & the Pups purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.



XO- Lisa, Phil & the Pups - March 12, 2025 at 09:48 PM

JF

“ Judy, Kirsten, Joshua, Jeremy & Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Karen June Bradford Stipes.

Judy, Kirsten, Joshua, Jeremy & Family - March 12, 2025 at 08:07 PM

JF

“ Judy, Kirsten, Joshua, Jeremy & Family purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.



Judy, Kirsten, Joshua, Jeremy & Family - March 12, 2025 at 08:07 PM

BB

“ Thoughts and prayers are with Mrs. Stipes family/friends. I remember her so fondly from my four years at BHS.

Beth Blevins - March 12, 2025 at 07:53 PM

DA

“ *Dixons, Susan, Cathy, Debbie, and all purchased the Basket Full of Wishes for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.*



Dixons, Susan, Cathy, Debbie, and all - March 12, 2025 at 03:01 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Karen June Bradford Stipes.

March 12, 2025 at 11:34 AM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.*



March 12, 2025 at 11:34 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.*



March 12, 2025 at 11:04 AM

HC

“ Harper General Contractors purchased the Pink Tribute Spray for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.



Harper General Contractors - March 12, 2025 at 09:33 AM



“ Heavenly and Harmony was purchased for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.



March 12, 2025 at 09:06 AM

BW

“ A wonderful, caring lady and a joy to know. She will be greatly missed. My deepest condolences to Jay and family. ❤️

BARBARA J WALLER - March 11, 2025 at 09:07 PM



“ Your Light Shines was purchased for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.



March 11, 2025 at 04:18 PM

PM

“ Pat, Jim Missy, Mandy Sam, Denny Mindy planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Karen June Bradford Stipes.

Pat, Jim Missy, Mandy Sam, Denny Mindy - March 11, 2025 at 03:12 PM

PM

“ Pat, Jim Missy, Mandy Sam, Denny Mindy purchased the Crystal Cross Bouquet for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.



Pat, Jim Missy, Mandy Sam, Denny Mindy - March 11, 2025 at 03:12 PM

SF

“ Song's Family purchased the Loving Lilies and Roses Bouquet for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.



Song's Family - March 11, 2025 at 01:24 PM

KW

“ Please accept my sincere condolences for the loss of your loved one, sending healing prayers and comforting hugs.

Kimberly Woolwine (BHS Class of 1989)

KW - March 11, 2025 at 12:43 PM

AC

“ Anne, John, Ryan and Katlyn Cocks purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Karen June Bradford Stipes.



Anne, John, Ryan and Katlyn Cocks - March 11, 2025 at 11:30 AM

KO

“ Karen has always been a wonderful blessing to me and Gail. Her sweet smile and friendliness will never be forgotten. Prayers for Jay and whole family . Ken

Ken Owens - March 11, 2025 at 10:56 AM

SP

“ Stephanie Pizaris lit a candle in memory of Karen June Bradford Stipes



Stephanie Pizaris - March 11, 2025 at 10:19 AM

AK

“ Karen will be so missed by our church family! Always loved seeing and talking with her, she always greeted with a smile and you left after talking with her with a wonderful feeling. May we carry on her example. Love and Prayers to you all as a family!!! Todd and Angie Kast

angie kast - March 11, 2025 at 10:10 AM