



Deborah Holton

October 19, 1962 - September 24, 2016

Deborah Denise Holton of Ocala, FL, passed away on Saturday evening, September 24, 2016 with family at her bedside. She was born on October 19, 1962 to parents Tom and Mary Holton, longtime residents of Ocala, FL. Debbie was gifted intellectually and grew up in Ocala where she attended elementary through high school and was taught by many wonderful teachers, graduating from Forest High School in 1980. She went on to earn an Associate's Degree from Central Florida Community College (CFCC), a Bachelor's Degree in Finance from the University of Florida, a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University as well as a law degree (Juris Doctor) from Florida State University. She has been a member in good standing of the Florida Bar since 1997. Usually, and in her typical, humble way, she described her impressive and broad education as being from The School of Life, which she described as "embracing the adventure one day at a time." Debbie loved to teach. As a teenager, she taught swimming lessons, helping many, many children learn to love the water and be safe in it. In late adolescence, she tutored while attending CFCC and later worked as the Learning Skills Laboratory Manager at the college. She put her finance and education background to good use while working as the Regional Training Manager for Monumental Life Insurance Company. While she enjoyed that work, her passion was working with youth so she returned to full time teaching, in both Marion and Seminole Counties. It was during her tenure in the Seminole and Marion school systems that she honed her

philosophy of engaging both students and their families in math, science and technology education. She took her students far beyond the typical classroom experience by leveraging technology with events such as the Jeopardy Tournament of Champions, Wheel of Mathematics Fortune, Mu Alpha Theta math competition, the World Series of Science, an Innovation and Inventor's Fair, Amusement Park Physics and Physics Olympics. She engaged families with Saturday Morning Science inviting families and their student children to participate in learning activities together. Through Shoebox Science, Debbie created take-home opportunities for students to share with their families at home. Though she never sought accolades she was recognized early on as Rookie Teacher of the Year. Once she added her education in law to the mix, she began to lobby helping professional organizations, local governments and green developers accomplish a shared sense of community responsibility. Later, she worked tirelessly as the Chief Academic and Strategic Officer of the Engage Institute. Her vision was to give every child the opportunity to achieve full potential, and create a brighter future for all of us. Debbie saw herself as incredibly blessed, coming from a family rich in education traditions and who helped her develop her own potential. She often tried to pay that gift forward by providing pro bono work to countless members of the community and by serving on the Board of Directors for the Marion County Kidney Foundation. An entrepreneur and eternal optimist, she always had ideas for how to weave together individuals with talent to form a brighter, healthier and happier community. Debbie will be keenly missed by her parents, Tom and Mary Holton, her brother and sister, Ken Holton and Cindy Hutto, her sister-in-law, Michelle Holton, her brother-in-law, Ken Hutto, her nephews, Michael Holton and Tyler Holton (along with wife, Shawnee), and her niece, Kacey Hutto. Debbie also leaves behind her aunts, uncles and cousins who were some of her lifelong, biggest fans. She is preceded in death by her grandparents, including her beloved Grammy, aunts, uncles and cousins. Debbie was no stranger to grief. She served many people who struggled and she saw the stressors faced by those she referred to as every day heroes'. She once

happened upon a tragic and fatal motor vehicle accident. With the child's parents already dead from the accident, Debbie cradled a mortally injured 3 year old in her arms, talking gently to her as she died while waiting for an ambulance to arrive. Nothing seemed too hard to face when Debbie saw a need in another. She loved learning, helping, serving. Lately, she developed an interest in family ancestry and geneology. She loved animals and worked on their behalf. She loved her companion dog, Floyd, whom she rescued. She attended family reunions with joy and consistency. She was a deeply spiritual and forgiving lady. Her foundation was her family and her valiant testimony of her Savior, Jesus Christ. Our family chain feels broken, And nothing feels the same, But as God calls us one by one, The chain will link again. We have confidence that the links in Heaven are linked again and Debbie is once again moving among those family she loves most, telling stories, sharing laughter and asking questions always asking questions and listening in turn to the stories told. A Memorial Service and Celebration of Life will be held at Roberts Funeral Home at 606 SW 2nd Avenue in Ocala, FL on Thursday, September 29th at 6pm. There will be time for sharing your favorite memory or two about times with Debbie. Please come willing to help others through their grief by sharing and hearing stories of this wonderful person. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to MARION COUNTY KIDNEY FOUNDATION INC, 2980 SE 3RD CT OCALA, FL 34471, www.MarionCountyKidneyFoundation.org; or NATIONAL PARKINSON'S FOUNDATION, www.Parkinson.org.

Tribute Wall

RW

“ *Our hearts are broken. Debbie was always there for the Ivey family. I'm so glad that we recently reconnected and able to share her journey.*

Rob & Trish Ivey Wilkerson - September 28, 2016 at 12:00 AM

BH

“ *Tom and Mary I am so sorry for your lost. She was a very amazing person. She will be greatly missed especially at the reunions. May God Bless you and the family. You are in my thoughts and prayers.Let me know if I can do anything.luv you.*

Barbara Holton - September 28, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MR

“ *Tom, Mary, Ken, Cindy and family, There are no words...But know that I recognize the pain of grief which you now face. This is one of the most beautiful tributes I've ever read. Your broken hearts were evident in each word. What a wonderful gift she has been to the world, and what a powerful set of footprints she leaves behind. Life is a journey...hers has transcended the limits of this physical world, but what a blessing to know that her smile will light the path for each of you to follow someday....I love you all and will hold you in my heart and prayers as you struggle through these very difficult days.Mary Sue*

Mary Sue Rister - September 28, 2016 at 12:00 AM

CV

“ *What a special friend Debbie has been for so many years... One of the first times we met we were playing croquet with a new group of friends from church. From there it was life-guarding at a lake for some kids..... A friendship formed quite quickly. Being one of the first to visit after the birth of our 2nd child, we shared many joys with her involving our 4 children. Even with a move back to Texas our friendship continued. It seems Debbie always had time to listen, with an encouraging word! Her travels elsewhere often had a stop close by. Bandera, San Antonio, Goliad, Runge, College Station, Houston, and Seguin. Memories full of joy, laughter, prayers, dogs, Longhorns, and multiple addresses on both of our parts will always bring a smile!*

Clayton and Phyllis Vaughan - September 28, 2016 at 12:00 AM