



Linda Mary Wise

October 3, 1947 - December 7, 2025

Linda Mary Wise, age 78, of Crystal River, Florida, passed away on Sunday, December 7, 2025.

Her friends knew her as Linda. To her students, she was Ms. Linda. But to her children, she will always be Mom.

Linda Mary Wise was born on October 3, 1947, in Minerva, Ohio, to the late Kenneth and Juanita Wise. The eldest of four siblings, she grew up with a strong sense of independence, curiosity, and resilience that would guide the rest of her life. She was preceded in death by her brother, Kenneth Lee Wise, and her beloved son, Jazz Lamarr Wise. She is survived by her siblings Doug, Debra (Foy), and Judith (DePoister), and by her children Colleen (Johnson), Vera, Juanita, Jordan "Nikki," and her bonus son Michael (Florez).

After spending her youth in Ohio, Linda set out on her own path with courage and grit. A proud veteran, she joined the United States Marine Corps in the 1960s. Shortly thereafter, with a beat up car and her dog by her side, she drove cross-country to California, winging it with only determination and an open heart. Eventually, she built a deep and lasting community in the Metro Detroit area, where she became a passionate advocate and activist. She championed HIV and AIDS prevention, comprehensive sex education, and LGBTQ rights at a time when doing so required bravery, conviction, and a bit of rebellion.

In her forties, Linda made a decision that would change her life and the lives of others forever. She began fostering children who needed more than the

system could give them, quietly sacrificing parts of her own life to give them a chance at safety, stability, and love. There were no medical needs, behavioral challenges, or circumstances that would make her turn a child away. Five of the children who showed up at her doorstep would later become her own through adoption. Their home was filled with radical acceptance, fierce support, boundless laughter and story telling, a bit of chaos, and Motown records spinning throughout the rooms. In 1995, Linda packed up her young family and relocated to Florida, where she spent the next 30 years building a life rooted in love, service, and community.

Linda was many things. She was an avid reader of mystery novels, a lover of horses, and a tough card player. She played a mean hand of Canasta, Rummy, and Phase 10 and took great joy in teaching her children and grandchildren how to win, even if it meant a little trash talk along the way. She was creative, loved arts and crafts, chocolate fudge, a good cup of Folger's coffee, and was a beautiful writer. She never met a stranger and could strike up a conversation with anyone. She had an incredible ability to connect with people from all walks of life and make them feel seen.

She spent the final 25 years of her career in education with the Citrus County School System. As an educator, Linda poured her heart into her students, especially those who did not receive the care or attention they needed at home. She went above and beyond to make them feel safe, valued, and loved, leaving an impact that extended far beyond the classroom.

Linda lived with an endless spirit of compassion and generosity. She opened her arms and her home to anyone who needed a soft place to land. Strangers became friends, and friends became family. She gave freely of her time, her love, and herself, even during seasons when life was not gentle with her. Her home was always filled with warmth, laughter, and a sense of belonging. She loved to travel and often reminisced about the beauty of Hawaii, the hills of San Francisco, and the many cruises she enjoyed with friends. When her children were young, she would load all five kids into a van, buckle everyone in, and hit the road. Sometimes the destination was the Midwest to visit family

or old friends, and sometimes there was no destination at all. She simply loved the drive.

She had blue eyes that sparkled when she smiled, a constant and often inappropriate sense of humor, warm hugs, tough advice, and worn hands that carried so much throughout her life. Her presence was comforting, her love unwavering, and her legacy lives on in every heart she touched.

A celebration of life for Linda will be held in March 2026 in Crystal River, FL. Details will be shared at a later date.

Tribute Wall

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“ Thank you for choosing me, for choosing all of us. I'll wait patiently for the day we are reunited. Love you forever.



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