



Kathleen Johnston

April 17, 1949 - December 30, 2025

Kathleen (Sayre) Johnston passed away on December 30, 2025, at her home in Kearney, Nebraska.

She was born on April 17, 1949, in Lincoln, Nebraska to Charles D. Sayre (1918-1986) and Kathleen (Riebe) Sayre (1918-1992).

Kathleen graduated from Lincoln High School in 1967 where she was very active, participating in Girls State, Student Council, Aqualinks Swimming, and Choir. A talented musician, she was skilled in playing the flute and banjo, and was honored as a senior speaker at commencement. She graduated from University of Nebraska Lincoln with a master's degree in Speech Pathology.

In November 1972, Kathleen married Stan Johnston. The couple lived in Nebraska City for 13 years before moving to Kearney in 1988. Kathleen retired from Kearney Public Schools in 2006 after a rewarding career working closely with students and preschool children.

Kathleen loved people, travel, singing, reading, exercising, and most of all, being a mother and grandmother. A lifelong Presbyterian, she was actively engaged in church life and choir. She was a devoted member at First Presbyterian Church in Kearney, where she formed many meaningful friendships. Even as she battled health challenges, she found the strength to

continue to participate in church choir activities and book group with her treasured friends. Kathleen was also a generous supporter of Kearney's annual Give Where You Live. Her legacy of humor, loyalty, spunk, determination, and positive spirit will be remembered by her family and friends.

Kathleen is survived by her husband, Stan Johnston; her sons, Shane (Renee) Johnston of Kearney and Jarrett (Sydney) Johnston of Lincoln; her daughter, Marisa (Steve) James of Lee's Summit, Missouri. Four brothers, C. Michael Sayre, Jeffrey Sayre, G. Kirkwood Sayre, and Christopher Sayre. Seven grandchildren, Lucas Johnston, Emily Johnston, Cassandra Johnston, Julia Johnston, Lila James, Grant James, and Cooper Johnston. She is also survived by many extended family members and dear friends.

A memorial service will be held 11:00 a.m. Thursday, January 29, 2026 at First Presbyterian Church in Kearney. Memorials are suggested to the Kearney Community Foundation. Condolences may be shared online at www.osrfh.com. Services are entrusted to O'Brien Straatmann Redinger Funeral and Cremation Services.

Cemetery Details

Kearney Cemetery

4400 Avenue I
Kearney, NE 68847
(308) 233-3244

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JAN **29**. 11:00 AM (CT)

First Presbyterian Church
4511 6th Ave.
Kearney, NE 68845

Tribute Wall



“ Jessica J. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Kathleen Johnston.

Jessica J. - January 28 at 11:56 AM



“ NAACLS BOD and Staff planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Kathleen Johnston.

NAACLS BOD and Staff - January 28 at 10:39 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Kathleen Johnston.



January 28 at 10:39 AM



“ Jeremy, Steph, Izzie & Kaleb Miller purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Kathleen Johnston.



Jeremy, Steph, Izzie & Kaleb Miller - January 17 at 11:59 PM

SA

“ My heart just flipped when I saw the news of Kathleen's passing. We were coworkers at ESU 4 in Auburn many moons ago. As SLP's we were connected at the hip with our clients and their families, yet my favorite memory, as her brother said, was her laugh. We hosted a shower for another ESU friend, and could hardly proceed as we were laughing so hard. I will forever cherish that day! We kept in touch for years, then lost touch. May her family know what a JOY their mother & wife was to others. Remember every precious moment.

Sandy Amos - January 09 at 01:26 PM

KG

“ Sympathy to your family. I heard from a Nebr City friend today that Kathleen passed. Kathleen was my solid rock and guidance when just out of grad school, I arrived in Nebr City for my first SLP position. I am thankful for her support. She was such a nice person with a great laugh. She was a skilled professional and advocate for many children & families.

Sincerely, Karen Stimbert Guck karenstimbertyguck@gmail.com

Karen Stimbert Guck - January 06 at 10:03 PM

CS

“ My beautiful and loving sister was always in my corner and never judgmental as her youngest brother did his best to navigate the ups and downs of life.

I will miss her wit and insightful take on the world and will be forever grateful to have been a part of her family!

Much Love,
Brother Chris

Chris Sayre - January 01 at 01:32 PM

SE

Dear Chris, The fond memories growing up a couple blocks away from your family's home I sure remember your beautiful sister Kathy and know you, Kirk, Jeff and Mike adored her. To the Sayre family, Stan and all Kathleen's children, Grandchildren, the Johnston family and friends, you have my sincere sympathy. With prayers of love for all of you. Sincerely, Steve Eaton

Steve Eaton - January 10 at 03:40 PM

TP

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Tamy Peterson - December 31, 2025 at 07:57 PM

TP

“ *Kathleen was one of the first people to come to my aid when I had a child diagnosed with autism. She gave me hope, light and was a wonderful friend. She had a huge impact on our life and future. I was hoping to run into her and call her, "Caffeine". We laughed and laughed when she told me one of her "students" called her that. What a wonderful human.*

Tamy Peterson - December 31, 2025 at 07:54 PM