



Cathy Donovan

October 14, 1967 - November 13, 2023

****In Lieu of Flowers, Memorials are Preferred****

Dr. Cathy Donovan, a beloved mother, sister, daughter, aunt, church member, and physician died suddenly and tragically on Monday, November 13, 2023. Cathy was born in St. Petersburg, FL on October 14, 1967 as the youngest of a set of twins. She grew up in Florida, attending the University of Miami where she was a member of the "Band of the Hour" during the peak of the Hurricane football powerhouse. She then attended medical school at the University of North Carolina and did a family medicine residency in Spartanburg, South Carolina. She graduated from residency in 1996 and having fallen in love with both the health system and the community on Mille Lacs Lake, she moved to Minnesota, embracing all that Minnesota's beautiful outdoors has to offer. In 2000, she adopted her dearly loved daughter, Joy Chenghui Xu from Nanjing, China. Cathy embraced her life as a mother with her usual exuberance becoming a Girl Scout leader and school trip chaperone. In 2005 Cathy grew her family with the adoption of Shan Liang Dang from Luoyang, China. With the adoption of Shan, Cathy became an active sports mom and advocate for children with limb differences. Having seen her children grow into successful young adults, she used her free time to enjoy running, particularly with her beloved rescue dogs, most recently Sunny and Flash, and snuggling with her many cats, who would just show up in her life and demand to join her family. A long-time recreational runner, Cathy achieved a personal goal, successfully completing Grandma's Marathon in Duluth in June 2023 with her reluctant twin

sister. Other than running, Cathy was known for her love of travel, having visited 49 states before graduating from high school, her love of gardening, and her adventurous spirit, which resulted in her trying things that at times amused or horrified her family.

Cathy is survived by her beloved children, Joy and Shan; along with her son-in-law, Benedict Behrens, who is more like Cathy in many ways than her own children; her loving parents, George and Shirley Donovan; sisters, Robin Councilman (Dave) and Christy Pemberton (Dennis); nieces and nephews, Dana, Aaron, Kelsey, Amelia, Kyle, and Aiden; aunts and uncles, Joy and Bob Teasley, Eric and Sheree Cunningham, and Larry and Sally Newman and many friends and colleagues.

Cathy was preceded in death by her grandparents, Mattie and George Daughtery and Kelsie and George Donovan, Sr.; and aunt, Patricia Newman.

Her celebration of life will be held on Monday, November 20, 2023, at 1:00 pm at Holy Cross Catholic Church, Onamia, MN with coffee and desserts to follow.

In lieu of flowers, Cathy would appreciate donations in her honor to Wahkon Presbyterian Church (Wahkon, MN), Mille Lacs Health Systems, or Nubability (Nubability.org).

To View Livestream Please Click the Link and You Will Be Redirected: <https://my.gather.app/remember/cathy-donovan>

Tribute Wall



“ *Lemieur Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of Cathy Donovan*



Lemieur Funeral Homes - November 17, 2023 at 08:19 AM

LM

Cathy was mine and my son's primary doctor, she went the extra mile for everything she did for us. She was a beautiful person inside and out and Cathy will be missed by many. Condolences to her family and all others connected to her. This is a great loss to so many.

Lorraine Mickelson - November 17, 2023 at 03:07 PM

TB

Be life long or short, its completeness depends on what it was lived for.

*I know Cathy's mom and dad. They were blessed.
I am so sorry for their loss.*

Antonia Babski, Seminole, Florida

Toni Babski - November 17, 2023 at 03:07 PM

AH

Cathy was my doctor since 2005, she was also my moms doctor. She was so caring always asking about my granddaughters and daughter. I will miss her something fierce.. my heart goes out to her family it is such a tragic loss.

Annette Haggberg - November 20, 2023 at 11:01 AM

BM

It's hard to believe she is gone. She's been my Dr. Since I moved up here about 17 yrs. ago. She always had a smile and cold hands made you smile with her. Thoughts and prayers to her family.

Brenda Mesecher - November 20, 2023 at 05:56 PM

LL

Lucky she to have had such loving, family-driven parents. We didn't know Cathy, but know that she was cherished by her parents. We wish all the family strength.

Louise & Larry Levin - December 04, 2023 at 10:43 AM

VD

I used to work with Dr. Donovan. She was always a joy to work with and always had a smile for everyone. She will be extremely missed. Thoughts and prayers to her family in this trying time.

Valerie Denton - December 18, 2023 at 11:43 AM

DD

Cathy was a great friend and classmate from ... it seemed like she was always there except for the brief break when I moved away. I can't recall a time she ever had a negative comment about anyone. She lifted up others around her. Prayers for her family (especially Robin).

David Dueppen - January 03, 2024 at 08:43 PM

BE

“ *Cathy was the best Primary Physician I have ever enjoyed. She was kind, truthful, respectful, never arrogant even when we disagreed - an excellent partner in my health care. She also supported our local, healthy food initiative. I am forever grateful for her and her way of Being. No words for her loss in this world. May Joy & Shan and all the Family and special Friends know love and peace.*

Barb Eller - November 20, 2023 at 03:52 PM

AJ

“ Thinking of Shan and Cathy's family during this difficult time. A donation was made to Nubability from your Office of Admission Family, Shan. Sending our love!

Anne Johnson - November 20, 2023 at 02:43 PM

CH

“ I was blessed to have Cathy as a house-mate during medical school. We each had a bedroom down in the back on the ground floor of a big house full of Christian students, looking out over the parking lot where her little pick-up truck was parked. We had great times down there with our pet birds (she had Beaker and a love bird, and I had Sterling). She was such a great, warm presence in my life. She was so smart, funny in an understated way, loving, joyful and devout. Her life trajectory of living in a house full of children and animals was what we talked and dreamed of. It was wonderful to see Cathy and her big loving family again at their annual family gathering which was up here in Maine years ago and to meet her children. I loved reading each year about Cathy and her family's adventures in her Christmas cards. My favorite was the year that she listed activities for each family member- long lists of activities and accomplishments for Shan and Joy and as I recall, only one item was on Cathy's list: "Keeping chaos at bay!" She was a grounding force for so many within her family and beyond. Knowing Cathy, I suspected that she was a beloved physician and community member in her Minnesota community, and that is confirmed by the many tributes to her on this site. So sad and sorry that this occasion of her untimely passing has brought everyone together, but hers is a life so worthy of celebrating. What an impact Cathy has had. I am glad that her spirit is with God and she is surely lighting up Heaven as she did Earth

Carol Hubbard - November 20, 2023 at 07:40 AM



“Cathy, Robin, and I have been best friends – sisters, really – for nearly 40 years. I don’t have the words to express how precious Cathy was to me and how much I admired her. She was such a special person: faithful, playful, kind, adventurous, smart, curious, dependable, funny, humble, practical, exceptionally generous, helpful, and loving (especially loving.) She lived life with love, faith, integrity, enjoyment, and appreciation. She also was an amazingly committed mother, and loved and enjoyed her children so very much. Looking at her impact on others, Cathy reminds me of my grandmother, which is the highest compliment I could pay someone. As for how she impacted me as a friend, Cathy always – always! – offered me such grace, unconditional love, and complete acceptance. One look and quiet smile from her would instantly reestablish a warm, delighted, companionable connection. She was often busy and on-the-go, but she found ways to meet me in my slower pace and let me know she was delighted to be with me. Likewise, while she had strong opinions, she listened respectfully to my point of view and we could simply love and accept each other whether or not we agreed. She was open about her challenges and faults, and so gentle and encouraging about mine. She believed in me when I couldn’t believe in myself and saw me as I couldn’t begin to see myself. We laughed together so often – I smile as I remember her wordless exclamations of amusement (or amused exasperation) as we caught up with each other in our weekly calls. We shared our sorrows and encouraged and held space for each other over the hard times. We celebrated each other’s joys and cheered each other on. We encouraged each other in faith and covered each other and our families in prayer. Despite the many miles and a sea between us these many years, we remained best friends. Usually, I think of her and immediately I smile, my heart warms, and I feel safe.

On Cathy’s and Robin’s recent birthday, I commented how Lauren Daigle’s song about friendship, *Thank God I Do*, reminded me of the friendship between we three. This friendship, as the song says, has been my safe place, my anchor, my constant, my steadiness, my shelter, and “I don’t know who I’d be if I didn’t know you...Thank

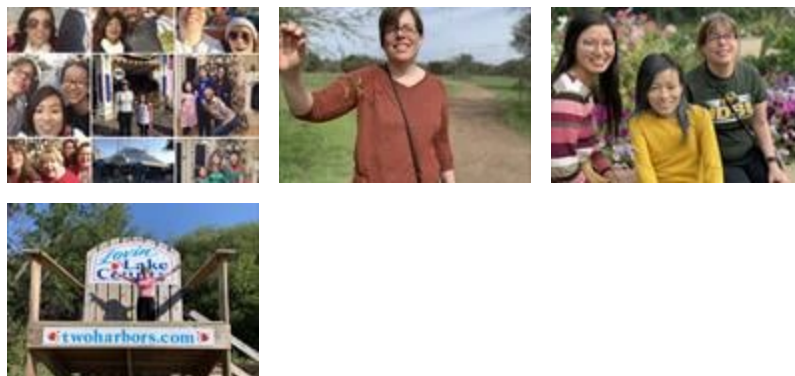
God I do.” I thank God for the extraordinary gift of Cathy’s life and her friendship. I thank God that, because of her faith in Him, I can be comforted and assured that I will see her again. May God grant comfort and peace to all who love her, especially her children and family, until then.



Antonia Hawkins - November 19, 2023 at 03:31 PM

MM

“ *Just really sad she is gone. I am grateful that Cathy and I took three trips together over the years am forever grateful for those time we spent together. I will miss her dearly. I Will always remember her and her kindness and her smile.*



Miao Miao - November 17, 2023 at 11:50 PM

PL

“ So many fond memories of Cathy after having worked alongside her for years. Saddened by this sudden, tragic loss. She will be missed. Lifting up her family and community in prayer during this time. She was loved.

Peter Lindbloom

Peter Lindbloom - November 17, 2023 at 11:45 PM

JS

“ Cathy was a fellow 4H mom, as our kids attended 4H together and had many high school activities together. Band, Choir, Jazz, Musicals, Wrestling. You don't work the 4H food stand together with a gaggle of children and not form some sort of bond. She was such an amazing Mom to her kids, showing up at all the events. She will be missed.

Jennifer Smart - November 17, 2023 at 06:10 PM

CS

“ Cathy Donovan was my daughter's and son-in-law's primary care physician. Even though they didn't live in Isle any more, they continued to see Cathy and communicate with her. Cathy treated them with care, dignity, and respect. She went over and above what is typical for a doctor. Dr. Donovan was like a lifeline for them. They counted on her advice and her knowledge. She was always there for them. I'm so sorry her life ended so tragically. She will be missed so very much.

Carol L. Schmitz - November 17, 2023 at 04:07 PM

KS

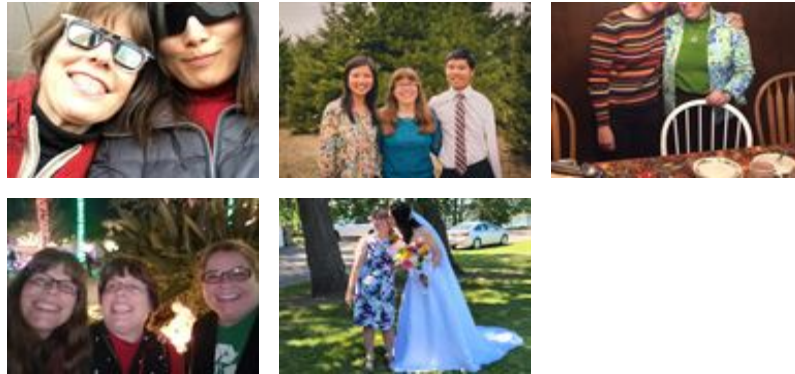
“ *Cathy was mine and my husband's primary doctor. She was a blessing from God because she treated me with respect. She is going to be missed so much. Condolences to her family. She will be missed by this community.* ”



Karen Lee Sornberger - November 17, 2023 at 01:46 PM



“ *53 files added to the album LifeTributes* ”



Lemieur Funeral Homes - November 17, 2023 at 08:19 AM

TW

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall* ”



TC Wan - November 16, 2023 at 08:58 PM

TW

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



TC Wan - November 16, 2023 at 08:54 PM

TW

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



TC Wan - November 16, 2023 at 08:50 PM

TW

“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



TC Wan - November 16, 2023 at 08:48 PM

TW

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



TC Wan - November 16, 2023 at 08:42 PM

TW

“ I knew Cathy since college days at the University of Miami. Between her and her twin sister Robin, she has always been the quieter of the two. Nonetheless, she has always been socially conscious, dedicated to pursuing a medical career for the sake of addressing the lack of accessible primary healthcare in many communities. She went beyond lip service to her beliefs and lived out her faith diligently, eschewing life in a big city to serving in a rural community where she felt she could have a greater impact.

In her own way, she would show concern for those in need. I was somewhat surprised that she would actively seek to adopt not just one, but two orphans from China. Having to juggle a medical practice as well as being a single mother dealing with a cross-cultural family must have been challenging. Nonetheless, it was very much in character for her, not afraid to take on challenges, irrespective of how daunting they may be.

Unsurprisingly, her caring nature would extend to other living things as well. From macaws to cockatiels, Vietnamese pot bellied pigs to parakeets, she has always had one or more pets in her home. Her love for animals, both typical and atypical, was a big part of her life. They were family as much as the usual suspects were.

Cathy was more than a friend to me; we shared various joys and trials of young adulthood. She embodied the ethos of Steven Curtis Chapman’s song “Kindness,” inspiring me to do more with my life, to “love like we’ve been loved.” She will be sorely missed.

T. C.

TC Wan - November 16, 2023 at 06:58 PM

SN

“ I only met Cathy once or twice, but she has been integral to the life my uncle Jeremy Nyquist. Whenever I visit my uncle, he has a statement of gratitude and love about Cathy. I'm grateful and deeply saddened.

Steven Nyquist - November 16, 2023 at 05:43 PM

AG

“ I've known the Donovan family since I was a small child. Cathy and Robin babysat for my brother and me. My childhood is filled with wonderful memories of Cathy. She taught me to love pigs (and all animals), encouraged me to do my best at school and in all endeavors, and always showed kindness. She and Robin took us ice-skating for the first time which was a very big deal for two Florida kids. As adults, her kindness continued with fun FB updates, and most recently, she sponsored my three kids in their school fun-run fund raiser. Every single interaction with Cathy has always been positive, insightful, and meaningful. I will miss her terribly. My heart, thoughts, and prayers are with her family and all the other numerous people mourning her loss.

Ann Guinn - November 16, 2023 at 05:19 PM

SJ

Cathy has been my doctor for several years now. She was a very caring doctor. I loved her hugs!!! I loved her! To know her is to love her!!!❤️

Sharon Johnson - November 20, 2023 at 03:13 PM

TH

“ I am so deeply saddened by the loss of Dr. Donovan! She was my primary care doctor, my favorite doctor I’ve ever had. She was the most compassionate, empathetic and competent doctors I’ve ever known. She also had a great sense of humor. I never saw her without that beautiful and contagious smile on her face. I want to tell a funny story about her. She told me a few years ago that I had to always wear supportive shoes because of my neuropathy, so no more flip flops! Well, I love my flip flops in the summer. A few months ago I saw her and she casually said “I see someone’s been wearing sandals cuz you have a great tan on your feet!” I blushed and said “ Dr. Donovan, you always catch me.” Well a few weeks ago she saw me in the waiting room (I didn’t even think she saw me) she came up behind me and said “You’re going to have to put those away soon because it’s getting cold.” Again, she busted me! We both laughed. I tell this story hoping whoever reads it will smile and remember what a joy she was to be around! My heart goes out to her family and all the many coworkers at the hospital who have had to work every day amid their extreme grief. This is a very sad time for the whole community and outward. I absolutely adored her and will miss her!

Teresa Hooven - November 16, 2023 at 02:18 PM

JJ

“ Cathy was one of 7 moderators for my "parenting with connection" Facebook groups (for all children, but especially for those raising kids from hard places) Oh, how she will be missed, as our admin/moderator team limps onward supporting parents of tweens, teens, and young adults without her expertise. I will miss enlightening parents who wanted to argue with her about medical issues, that they were arguing with an M.D., lol! I loved her humility, respected her advice, and was impressed by her integrity. Cathy, you are SO loved and deeply missed. I mourn your absence, but not as one who has no hope, for you are with Jesus... so I know I will see you again in Eternity.

Julie Jones - November 16, 2023 at 09:25 AM

MN

“ Dr. Donovan was my primary healthcare provider for several years when I lived in Isle. She was a very peaceful person who explained things a non-medical person could understand, and she was also very kind and easy to talk with. I'm finding it difficult to wrap my head around her tragic and preventable passing, and my heart aches for her family, colleagues and the poor surviving doggie who watched the accident. She will never be forgotten.

Melissa Nelson - November 15, 2023 at 11:34 PM

MH

“ So many things to say about her. My fondest memories of her will always be with her of when I delivered my kids with her.

Maria S Hansen - November 15, 2023 at 10:10 PM

MC

“ *Cathy has always been so kind to myself and my family. She will be greatly missed by many. Prayers to her family.*



Melissa Calkins - November 15, 2023 at 08:58 PM

CE

“ *So much to say about Cathy but I can't find the words. She was a wonderful person & doctor. My thoughts, hugs love and prayers are with her family, friends and colleagues. I am so very sorry for your loss.*



Chris Evans - November 15, 2023 at 08:53 PM

MP

“ *She was a wonderful person, colleague and doctor. We grieve with the family at the tragic loss of this amazing lovely person. Blessings and prayers to the family. May God sustain you.*

marilyn phillips - November 15, 2023 at 07:44 PM

TF

Going to miss her she was a great doctor she helped me out when I needed it

Tammy Fleck - November 15, 2023 at 08:23 PM

PW

*Cathy will be remembered for so many things. She was a pillar of our communities and a vital member of the Wahkon Presbyterian Church. I feel blessed to have known her and her children, Joy and Shan. Thoughts and prayers are with her family.
Phyllis Wheeler*

Phyllis Wheeler - November 17, 2023 at 11:22 AM