

Roxana Superintendent, Sister, Stephanie, Express Profound Emotions About Their Cherished Nancy Holtorf

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ROXANA - The Roxana family is heartbroken today and grieving the loss of Nancy Holtorf, a remarkable teacher at Roxana Junior High. Holtorf died on Wednesday after suffering a stroke near the start of school.

Roxana Superintendent Debra Kreutztrager, speaking for all those grieving in the district, said: “The Roxana family is heartbroken and is grieving the loss of Nancy Holtorf. To say Nancy was special is an understatement. If you met Nancy and had even the briefest encounter you knew you were blessed. She joined the Roxana Family in 2019 serving students with special needs. Although the calendar days were few, her impact was massive. She lived out her purpose of serving others, making a positive impact, and living out her faith.

“She brightened every moment with her smile, energy, and genuine love. Selfishly, we all want more time with Nancy, but our Roxana family will move forward and be better because Nancy has left a legacy that will never be forgotten. We will not take one day for granted because Nancy’s profound example reminds us that we are called to serve others throughout the time we have together. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with her husband, Derek, and her family.”

Nancy was also a long-time teacher in the Alton School District and fellow staff members there are also mourning her loss today.

Alton School District Superintendent Kristie Baumgartner said Nancy was a beloved teacher in Alton for over 12 years.

"In Nancy's time, she had a visible and remarkable impact on her students," Baumgartner said. "She brought so much joy and enthusiasm into her teaching and just exemplified what it means to be a teacher at the highest level.

Nancy’s sister, Stephanie Mayfield-Stoyanoff, said the emotions and decisions her family has been faced with over the past few days have been the most difficult to experience.

"Our sweet Nancy is not with us anymore. It brings me to absolute tears to comment about it," her sister said. "We are still in shock and feel absolutely devastated. After undergoing multiple brain exams, Nancy was declared brain dead. Brain death is different than coma; there is no brain activity, it is final. Nancy is the most selfless person I know. She always put other people's happiness before her own.

“The messages I have received about Nancy all share a common theme: she was a friend to me when I had none, she was always positive, spreading happiness, she cared when no one else did, she made me really feel like somebody, she listened to me, she helped me... My family and I have tried our hardest these past few days to finally give Nancy exactly what she wanted. Nancy didn't talk about her death often, but when she did she made a few things very clear to us. She wanted all of her organs donated so someone else may live, she wanted parts of her body donated to science to help find a cure for diabetes, she did not want to be buried in a creepy cemetery, if she had a funeral she wanted everyone who attended to be happy and Diet Coke to be served, and most of all she wanted to die when her pet Chihuahua Rose died.”



Stephanie continued: "We would tell her how silly this was, but she would tell us, "Oh no, when Rose dies, I don't wanna live another day. I can't imagine life without my Rosey."

"We were having a very difficult time coming to terms with the fact that even though Nancy's heart is beating in her chest and her organs are working, she is technically deceased. More than anything when Nancy died she wanted her organs donated. She worried about helping others even in her death. While speaking with the organ donor caregivers we learned that only 1% of donors actually die in such a way that all or most of their organs can be donated.

"For one to be able to donate all of their vital organs, they have to die from brain injury so their vital organs can be kept alive by artificial support. We have forced ourselves to accept that this was the only way Nancy could die for her to finally get what she wanted. She had to die young and she had to die by brain injury so all of her vital organs could be used to help someone else live. Her little Chihuahua will be 17 years old next month, so she never even had to say goodbye to Rose. Nancy's pancreas will be donated to science. And we learned that Nancy took such good care of her Type 1 Diabetes for the past 27 years that even her kidneys can be donated. Nancy will not be laid to rest in a "creepy cemetery."

Stephanie said the family will honor Nancy with a proper memorial service/celebration of life.

“To try and help fulfill her wishes of everyone being happy, we need a little time and will choose a date in the near future. And yes, per her request, Diet Coke will be served. Please continue to keep my parents, her husband Derek, and my siblings and I in your thoughts and prayers. We have all joined a club no one wants to be part of... outliving a child, and losing a spouse and sibling while you are young. The next few days, weeks, and months ahead will be the hardest times my family and I have ever faced.

“Nancy has not left a void, she's left a blast crater. She was such a huge presence. There truly will never be another Nancy. The only way we are finding any comfort in this is by reminding ourselves that she is happy, and in her death, many others will be saved. No more needles, no more medicine, no more blood sugar high and lows, no more fear of the complications of diabetes, and no more worrying about others. We love you, Nancy.”

Stephanie closed by saying: “Not a day will go by that I don't cry, think of you in everything I do, and miss you like crazy. You have touched so many more lives than you could ever imagine. We can't wait to see you again, Nancy. We can't wait to hear that contagious laugh and see that huge smile. Knowing you, you have already made many new friends at Heaven's Gates.”

[Chris Rhodes also contributed to this story.](#)