

Mary Beth's family would like to say "Thank You" for all the acts of love and kindness shown to them. Your expression of sympathy will always be remembered.



Mary Beth O'Reilly

May 8, 1942 - March 7, 2026

*Beloved Wife, Mother, Grandmother
Philanthropist, Humanitarian, Community Leader*

Mary Elizabeth (Murney) O'Reilly, 83, of Nixa, Missouri, peacefully slipped away to meet her Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, on March 7, 2026. She passed away at her beloved home in Florida, surrounded by her family and loving husband of sixty-one years, Charlie O'Reilly, after a decades-long battle with breast cancer.

Mary Beth was born on May 8, 1942, in Bremerton, Washington, to William and Alba Murney. When she was three years old the family returned to Missouri and settled in Ste. Genevieve, where she grew up along the limestone bluffs above the Mississippi River. She was the oldest of six children and graduated from Valle Catholic High School in 1960. From an early age she showed the instincts of a caregiver and a deep concern for others that would shape the course of her life.

She attended DePaul Hospital School of Nursing in St. Louis and graduated in 1964, beginning what would become a lifelong calling in health care and service to others. Her educational background included a BSN degree from Drury University and an Honorary Degree "Doctor of Humane Letters" from Drury in 2009. After finishing nursing school, Mary Beth packed her MG convertible and headed south toward Florida, planning to start the next chapter of her life. On the way she stopped "briefly" in Springfield to visit her Uncle Bob and Aunt Lucille Murney. That short visit changed everything. Uncle Bob and Jerry Stiefvater introduced her to a young man named Charlie O'Reilly. Their courtship quickly became part of family lore. On one of their early dates Charlie took her frog gigging at Lindenlure; a proper Ozarks welcome if there ever was one. Mary Beth had originally planned to continue her drive to Florida, but somewhere along the riverbank she reconsidered. She married Charlie on April 24, 1965, at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Springfield, and never did finish that drive south.

Mary Beth and Charlie spent the next sixty-one years building a life together in southwest Missouri. They raised their three sons; Pat, Tim, and Ryan; largely on their family farm near Nixa, though Mary Beth herself always maintained she was not a farmer. Her professional life in health care was wide-ranging and deeply meaningful. She worked as a staff nurse in local hospitals, served as a physician assistant for a Springfield surgeon, and taught pediatrics at St. John's School of Nursing. She later became Coordinator of Community Resources for Oxford Home Health Care and then Director of Community Services for Hospice of Southwest Missouri, where she helped families navigate the difficult realities of death and dying with compassion, honesty, and dignity.

Mary Beth later developed and managed a nurse triage and physician referral program at St. John's Regional Health Center, helping connect patients with appropriate levels of care during a time of rapid change in health care delivery. While she held many professional roles, the work that would define her life began after she faced her own illness. In the mid-1990s she was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer. Rather than withdraw from the fight, Mary Beth turned outward and began asking how she could help others facing the same diagnosis.

In 2000 she founded the Breast Cancer Foundation of the Ozarks, an organization dedicated to providing support, resources, and financial assistance to families affected by breast cancer throughout the region. The foundation was also established in memory of a close friend who died from breast cancer at the age of 31. What began as a small effort grew into an incredibly important support organization. Mary Beth personally mentored and supported countless women, men and families navigating diagnosis and treatment, offering encouragement, guidance, inspiration and practical assistance when it was needed most.

Community service remained a constant thread throughout her life. She served in leadership roles with the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, the American Red Cross, the Child Advocacy Center, and many other organizations committed to improving the health and well-being of the Ozarks. She was appointed to the Missouri Governor's Council on Health and Fitness and participated in numerous initiatives aimed at strengthening communities and improving public health. She was awarded Springfieldian of The Year and Humanitarian of The Year and also received Missourian of The Year recognition in 2001. Yet those who knew her best understood that the long list of organizations and accomplishments was never the point. What mattered most to Mary Beth was helping people in difficult circumstances.

Her Catholic faith shaped both her life and her work. She believed strongly that patients should educate themselves, seek second opinions, participate actively in their care, and refuse to let illness or outside circumstances define their lives. She was known for her willingness to answer late-night phone calls, sit with people who were frightened, offer honest advice, and remind others that they were not alone in difficult moments.

She was adored by her surviving family, Charlie and her sons and daughters-in-law Pat and Shannon, Tim and Brooke, and Ryan and Brandi, as well as her nine grandchildren Alec (Taylor), Charlie, Liam, Grace, Evelyn, Patrick, Clara, Hadley and Finnegan. She was preceded in death by her parents Bill and Alba Murney, but is survived by her loving siblings Gurutej Kaur (Keith), Celeste Steen (Reg), Ciena Rose William, Bill Murney (Lisette) and Louise Wagner (Geoff) as well as many nieces and nephews, in addition to her "bonus sisters" Nancy O'Reilly and Rosalie O'Reilly Wooten, brothers in law Larry O'Reilly (Any) and David O'Reilly (Stacey), and Pam O'Reilly along with many other family members and close friends. Charlie and Mary Beth spent significant time in Florida and Colorado in retirement and cherished their countless close friends in those areas as well.

Mary Beth's life was defined by a simple instinct: when someone was hurting, she showed up. She listened carefully, spoke plainly, and helped people find the next step forward. Her legacy lives on through her family and friends, the Breast Cancer Foundation of the Ozarks, and through the countless lives she touched with her compassion, courage, and steady presence.

The family requests memorial contributions to the Breast Cancer Foundation of the Ozarks 620 W. Republic Road, Springfield, MO 65807.

When tomorrow starts without me

When tomorrow starts without me,
Please try to understand,
That an angel came and called my name,
And took me by the hand;
The angel said my place was ready,
In Heaven far above,
And that I'd have to leave behind
All those I dearly love.
But when I walked through Heaven's Gates,
I felt so much at home, for God looked down,
Smiled at me and told me "Welcome Home."

So when tomorrow starts without me,
Don't think we're far apart,
For every time you think of me,
I'm right there in your heart.

By David Romano

Funeral Mass

Opening Song....."Companions on the Journey" #459
First Reading*Wisdom 3: 1-9*
Charlie O'Reilly
Responsorial Psalm.....*Psalm 23*
Second Reading.....*Corinthians 4: 14 ~ 5: 1*
Liam O'Reilly
Gospel.....*Matthew 25: 31-46*
Preparation of the Gifts....."To Live With Him Forever"
Gifts presented by Evelyn, Grace, Clara and Hadley O'Reilly
Communion Song....."Eye Has Not Seen" #529
Communion Meditation....."Ave Maria"
Courtney Peebles
Song of Farewell #812
Sending "City of God" #382

Pallbearers

Alec, Patrick and Finnegan O'Reilly

Music

Paula Ringer, Organist
Melinda Arnold, Choir Director
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Choir

Celebrant

The Most Reverend Edward M. Rice

Concelebrants

The Most Reverend John J. Leibrecht
The Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Jr
Father Eddie DeLeon