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RACHEL BURRELL, 79, FOUNDED FERNSIDE CENTER

A tragedy in her own life inspired Rachel Burrell to help others handle the tragedies in theirs.

Mrs. Burrell, of Cincinnati, who died Wednesday at 79, founded the Fernside Center for Grieving Children after the death of her son, David, in 1982.

A graduate student at the University of Cincinnati, he was riding home from class when a car hit him. He died 24 hours later.

ADVERTISEMENT An organization called Compassionate Friends, which supports parents who have had a child die, helped Rachel and her husband, Paul, with their grief. She found herself drawn to grieving younger women, who had to tend to their own grief as well as that of their young children.

In 1985, she heard former ABC News anchorman Peter Jennings speak of the Dougy Center in Portland, Ore., the nation's first center for grieving children. A visit there inspired her to start the nation's second such program.

In the fall of 1986, working out of her own living room, she opened Fernside, which she named for a street near Walnut Hills High School in Cincinnati, from which her son graduated. When he needed a ride home from school, he would say, "I'll be waiting for you at Fernside."

The center initially served 16 children and 12 adults. Now, more than 800 children, teens and adults attend the program's support groups every year.

The center became practically Mrs. Burrell's entire life, said her daughter, Ann Burrell of Cincinnati.

"When David died, she saw a need out there that wasn't being filled," Ann Burrell said. "It just happened to match up with who she was."

Mrs. Burrell told her children she felt she was raised by a grieving child herself, but one who had no support.

Her mother, Rachel Ober, experienced three deaths in three years: of her brother, who accidentally shot himself, of her little sister and then her mother.

Born in Akron, Mrs. Burrell learned to read music before she could read books. When she started school, she couldn't understand why portraits of the presidents were displayed, but not the great composers.

She became proficient enough at the piano that she gave lessons as an adult. Her mother wanted her to become a concert pianist, but she had other ideas.

She studied musicology at Connecticut College, and graduated in 1950 with a bachelor of arts degree. She continued her musical studies at Columbia University from 1950 to 1952, but instead of finishing her master's degree, got married.

While at a funeral in 1951 in Akron, she met the mother of Paul Burrell, who told her that he had also gone to Columbia. Mrs. Burrell invited him to her house. Normally very choosy about her dates, she couldn't find any fault with him.

They were married in 1953, and remained so until his death in 2001. They moved to Cincinnati in 1962, when he became a professor at the University of Cincinnati.

In addition to raising four children, Mrs. Burrell volunteered at the Eastern Avenue Community Center, served as a den mother for the Boy Scouts and as a PTA vice president at Kilgour School, and was co-founder of the Compassionate Friends Chapter in West Harrison, Ohio.

She served as the director of Fernside from 1986 until 1998.

She spent the last two years of her life at a local assisted living facility with her cat, Tucker. If Tucker was comfortable, her comfort didn't matter.

About a month ago, the staff found Tucker asleep on her bed, with her curled up on the floor beside it, asleep.

"She was very fun to be around," her daughter said. "The thing you wanted to make her do, whenever you were around her, was to make her smile or laugh."

Other survivors include sons, Peter Burrell of Cincinnati and Christopher Burrell of Boston.

Mass of Christian Burial will be at 10:30 a.m. Monday at St. Mary Church in Hyde Park. Visitation will be from 2 to 6 p.m. Sunday at the Elden A. Good Funeral Home, west of Hyde Park Square. Memorials are suggested to Fernside Center for Grieving Children, Box 633597, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45236-3597.

OTHER DEATHS

Emma Sowder Beckham, 73, of Georgetown, died Thursday at Georgetown Community Hospital. Arrangements are pending at Elliston-Stanley Funeral Home, Williamstown.

Mary E. Crawford, 88, of Latonia, formerly of Visalia, died Tuesday at her residence. She was a retired cafeteria employee from Visalia Elementary School, a cook with Ryland Country Club, and a member of Visalia Baptist Church. Her husband, Clyde G. Crawford; and daughters, Juanita Crawford and Betty Crawford Wahn, preceded her in death.

Survivors include a son, Butch Crawford of Latonia; daughters, Judy Crawford Campbell of Atlanta, Ga., and Lou Crawford of Visalia; seven grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren.

Services will be at 10 a.m. Saturday at Connley Brothers Funeral Home, Latonia. Visitation will be from 4 to 7 p.m. today at the funeral home. Burial will be in Highland Cemetery, Fort Mitchell. Memorials are suggested to the charity of the donor's choice.

Harold "Buck" Gillespie, 79, of Falmouth, died Sunday at River Valley Nursing Home, Butler. He was a member of Trinity Baptist Church, Falmouth.

Survivors include brothers, Kenneth Gillespie of Falmouth and Earl J. Gillespie of Weatherford, Texas.

Graveside services will be at 1 p.m. Monday at Riverside Cemetery, Falmouth. Visitation will be from 5 to 8 p.m. Sunday at Woodhead Funeral Home, Falmouth. Memorials are suggested to the Pendleton County Library, 228 Main St., Falmouth, Ky. 41040.

Betty Marie Hazel Lay, 79, of Williamstown, died Thursday at St. Elizabeth Medical Center South, Edgewood. She was a retired sandwich artist from Pilot Truck Stop. Her husband, James O. Lay, preceded her in death.

Survivors include daughters, Pam Hacker of Williamstown and Vivian Auteri of Bellevue; stepsons, William Lay of Warsaw, Joe Lay of Union, Dennis Lay of DeFuniak Springs, Fla., and Larry Lay of Florence, Ind.; a sister, Dottie Craycraft of Vero Beach, Fla.; two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Services will be at 2 p.m. Saturday at Stith Funeral Home, Florence. Visitation will begin there at 11 a.m. Saturday. Burial will be in Petersburg Cemetery, Plummers Landing.

Emma Taylor May, 82, of Crittenden, died Wednesday in Dry Ridge. She was a homemaker and a member of Crittenden Baptist Church. Her husband, Lonnie May Jr., preceded her in death.

Survivors include a son, Lonnie May III of Crittenden; sisters, Mary Alice Creech of Dry Ridge and Marie Speaks of Latonia; two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Services will be at 2 p.m. Saturday at Elliston-Stanley Funeral Home, Crittenden. Visitation will begin there at noon Saturday. Burial will be in Crittenden Cemetery. Memorials are suggested to the American Cancer Society, 297 Buttermilk Pike, Fort Mitchell, Ky. 41017.

Arthur Lee "Pee Wee" Miller, 72, of Falmouth, died Wednesday at Good Samaritan Hospital, Cincinnati. He was a retired bulldozer operator and a member of Mount Moriah Christian Church, Butler. A son, Shane Miller, preceded him in death.

Survivors include a son, Wayne Miller of Falmouth; daughters, Deborah Williams of London and Rebecca Spegal of Demossville; brothers, Leo Miller Jr. of Arizona and Billy Miller of Falmouth; sisters, Evelyn Purdy, Velma Steele, and Patricia Miller, all of Falmouth; 10 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Services will be at 2 p.m. Saturday at Woodhead Funeral Home, Falmouth. Visitation will begin there at noon Saturday. Burial will be in Mount Moriah Cemetery, Butler.

Patricia Mueller, 74, of Walton, died Thursday at St. Elizabeth Medical Center, Edgewood. Arrangements are pending at Ronald B. Jones Funeral Home, Ludlow.

Mary Jo Robinson, 73, of Elsmere, died Wednesday at St. Elizabeth Hospice, Edgewood. She was a homemaker. Her husband, Peter H. Robinson, preceded her in death.

Survivors include sons, Pete Robinson and Randall Robinson, both of Elsmere; daughters, Donna Jo Campbell of Corinth, Karen Brewer of Ludlow, Sheila Neal, Teresa Cain, and Pamela Howard, all of Elsmere; brothers, Larry Jester of Harrison, Ohio, and Ricky Jester of Vevay, Ind.; sisters, Mary Jane Lamb of Patriot, Ind., and Sissie Hobbs of Madison, Ohio; 18 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

Services will be at noon Tuesday at Chambers and Grubbs Funeral Home, Florence. Visitation will begin there at 10 a.m. Tuesday. Burial will be in Warsaw Cemetery.

Ricky Smith, 48, of Grant County, died Thursday in a construction accident in Kenton County. Arrangements are pending at Elliston-Stanley Funeral Home, Crittenden.

Wilma Cornelia Tiemeyer, 88, of Melbourne, died at 3:28 p.m. Tuesday at St. Luke Hospital East, Fort Thomas.

She was a homemaker and a member of First Baptist Church, Silver Grove. She was a Sunday school teacher at the church and a member of the Helen Kopp Bible class and the American Rose Society of Northern Kentucky. Her husband, George Tiemeyer, died in 1993.

Survivors include daughters, Wanda Tiemeyer Enzweiler of Cold Spring and Sharon Tiemeyer Dees of Newport; two grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Services will be at 10 a.m. Saturday at Alexandria Funeral Home. Visitation will be from 5 to 8 p.m. Friday at the funeral home. Burial will be in Alexandria Cemetery. Memorials are suggested to First Baptist Church, 5086 Four Mile Road, Silver Grove, Ky. 41085.

This obituary is reprinted to correct information given to The Kentucky Post.

James "Skip" Wardia, 50, of Orlando, Fla., formerly of Ryland Heights, died Oct. 5 as a result of an automobile accident. He was a roofer with Ralph Jones Roofing.

Survivors include his fiancé, Jo Ann Miller of Orlando, Fla.; sons, David B. Frost of Stark, Fla., and Justin R. Wardia of Covington; daughters, Anita T. Frost and Tina M. Wardia, both of Covington; his parents, Vincent and Glenda Wardia of Ryland Heights; brothers, Mark Wardia of Covington and Vincent J. Wardia of Taylor Mill; sisters, Bonita Harrison of Villa Hills, Anna Perry and Tina Wardia, both of Ryland Heights; his step-grandmother, Henriaetta Luther of Latonia; and four grandchildren.

Services will be at 8 p.m. Saturday at Chambers and Grubbs Funeral Home, Florence. Visitation will begin there at 6 p.m. Saturday. Burial will be in Floral Hills Cemetery, Taylor Mill.

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