



Karen Gabrielsen

August 16, 1960 - February 5, 2026

Karen Elizabeth Gabrielsen, 65, of Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood, passed away February 5, 2026.

Born in Rochester, New York on August 16, 1960, the first-born child of the late Marie and John Apple. Raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan, she graduated from St. Thomas High School and received her Bachelor's in Science from Northern Michigan University.

Karen raised her two children in New Berlin, Wisconsin; she was the very proud mother to Victoria Marie (fiancée Ana Marroquin) and Keith Vincent Gabrielsen. In 2024 she made the move to Chicago, a city she loved, to be close to her children.

She was the founder and director of Victory Lady Fitness Center in the 90's, as health and fitness were always at her core. She would later thoroughly enjoy her career at Barnes and Noble, where she held roles as both Merchant Manager and Children's Lead.

Karen was an avid reader and coffee drinker. Her daily walks and runs were a staple in her life until the early 2000s. She was a proud activist, fighting alongside women for their rights and equality. Her kindness and humor were radiant, yet she had her own kind of edginess. Her love for photography

spanned from her youth until her final days.

She is also survived by her brothers John (Ashley) and Rodney (Annette) Apple. Preceded in death by her parents Marie and John Apple, and her former husband Keith Gabrielsen.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made in her name to any Multiple Sclerosis organization.

Services will be private.

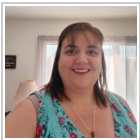
Arrangements by Inclusive Funeral Care, 773-318-1305 or www.InclusiveFuneralCare.com.

Tribute Wall

MJ

“ Karen was the rock of Gibraltar in a sometimes stormy sea at B&N. She embraced everyone but took no crap from anyone, and was a true joy as co-worker and friend. I was just recently thinking of her. I'm so very sorry for your and all of our loss. Heart hugs. Marcella Jones

Marcella Jones - February 20 at 05:52 PM



“ karen was kind of a second mom when i worked at B&N. i remember her "yelling" at me for eating skittles at 8am, calling me "fictional kelly" when i ran the fiction department, and always being ready to talk about her two favorite things: books and her children. i loved her sense of humor and non-nonsense approach to life. she will be greatly missed.

Kelly Kramer - February 07 at 02:00 PM

SB

“ Karen, you were such a joy to work with! Your indomitable spirit will be missed. Condolences to your kids & friends.

Stephanie Bermke - February 07 at 11:05 AM



“ Karen was so fun to work with at BN. She was quick to laugh in the most genuine, authentic way. She helped me through some tough times & I will never forget her for that. What I will remember most is the love Karen had for her children. She was so proud and boast daily about updates in their lives. Rest in peace Karen, you taught me so much about passion and strength.

Amanda Henes - February 07 at 10:40 AM

SS

“ I worked with Karen at Barnes & Noble, both when she was a manager, and then when she had slid over to being a regular bookseller again. She was extremely supportive, compassionate, and a wonderful mentor. She helped me get through a lot of difficult things when I first started working there. she had a lot of grit, honesty, and loved discussing books and hearing about what other people were reading, even if it did not align with her interests. She was just a kind and wonderful person. rest in power and my heart goes out to her kids. -Steph S.

Stephanie Suchecki - February 07 at 08:23 AM

VI

“ Picture of us at the Hamilton show. We had so much fun together. We became fast friends while working at B&N. Our sense of humor just clicked. Karen was a force to be reckoned with....tough (but kind), sarcastic (but funny), opinionated (but fair), business-minded (yet creative), but most of all supportive and fun! She helped me through some hard times. She listened to me when I needed to vent, let me cry it out, and always checked on me to make sure I was OK (not to mention kicked my butt when I needed it). All done with that sharp wit of hers. We both valued our friendship, and never took it for granted. I will always miss my dear, dear friend. RIP



Violet Ilic - February 06 at 09:54 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Team Inclusive Funeral Care - February 06 at 08:36 PM

VI

Karen was (and still is) proud of her children. It's the love for you both in her eyes.... ❤️

Violet Ilic - February 06 at 09:56 PM



You all have the same beautiful smile.

Amanda Henes - February 07 at 10:41 AM