



Lea Faye Schweitz

November 13, 1974 - September 24, 2025

Forever the explorer, Lea Faye Schweitz, (nee Miller), 50, has left behind her battle with lung cancer in search of a new adventure. Lea passed away at home in Oak Park on September 24, 2025, surrounded by love. For the beautiful mortals who knew her in this existence, Lea was a fierce and adoring mother to Isaac and Kalder, a connector of spirits to a wide circle of friends and loved ones, a defender of nature, a community builder, and a teacher to her core.

Lea's love of adventure came naturally. She was born in Springfield, Missouri, to Marcia (née Morton) and the late Gregory Miller, and raised in German Valley, Illinois, alongside her sister Dana Dillard—sometimes friend, sometimes nemesis, always sister. She graduated from Forreston High School and attended Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, where she spent summers driving to the Badlands to conduct research on prairie restoration and insect habitats following controlled burns. After marrying her high school sweetheart, Kurt Schweitz, her Luther path culminated in her receiving her Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Biology. Lea went on to attend the University of Chicago where she earned her Master's degree and went on to attain her PHD in divinity, philosophy, and theology.

Lea's next career adventure kept her rooted at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, where she served for a decade as a professor and

director for the Zygon Center for Religion and Science, connecting religion and science and encouraging dialogues between those with seemingly disparate views and fostering communication between those working in areas of academia, faith, and science. The work there paved the way for Lea to begin crafting the next leg of her journey, which included grant writing, contract work, teaching theology to individuals who were incarcerated, and her newfound passion in helping individuals navigate end-of-life planning. Her podcast, monthly meeting, and substack "Playdates With Death" can be found here: <https://playdateswithdeath.substack.com/>.

Lea was an adventurer and explorer of places and ideas and strove to connect these wonders to the people she loved and in whom she saw unfettered passion and uncapped potential through, play, discovery, critical questioning, and above all, curiosity. She appreciated the random glimpses of beauty that were everywhere – from the wildflowers that would emerge in urban landscapes to the buzzing of the bees to a random rock that would then find a home in her pocket. Lea's passion was love of others - as a mother, as an advocate, as a friend, as a community builder.

The circle of love that Lea built include her former husband's parents, Terry and Christine Schweitz and siblings Karl, Anna (Lucas), and Andrew; her nieces Emma, Rosaline, Marit, and Greta, and her nephews Brian and Jonah; her aunt Patricia Miller Heine (Roger); and her late uncle Gary (Gloria) Miller, her many cousins and extended family; and a circle of friends and found sisters that covers continents.

Lea's Memorial Playdate is being held Sunday October 19, 5:30 - 8:30pm, at Morton Arboretum's Thornhill Education Center. Entrance to the building and Lea's Formal Playdate begins promptly at 5:30pm.

In honor of Lea's work and mission to hold space for the whole spectrum of

life- this Playdate with Death for Lea will honor her spirit and wishes; providing attendees a formal remembrance service, spaces for quiet contemplation in the surrounding gardens, and a space to nourish the soul with play and creativity. Families welcome.

Guests please mention at the parking kiosk that you are attending Lea's memorial service for free parking and an all-day grounds pass. Service attendees may enjoy free all-day admission to the Arboretum on Sunday prior to the event.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to offset final expenses here: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-lea-focus-on-health-and-family>.

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

Previous Events

Memorial Celebration

OCT **19**. 5:30 PM - 8:30 PM (CT)

Morton Arboretum

4100 II-53

Lisle, IL 60532

<https://mortonarb.org/>

Entrance to the building and Lea's Formal Playdate begins promptly at 5:30pm. Mention at the parking kiosk that you are attending Lea's memorial service for free parking and an all-day grounds pass. Service attendees may enjoy free all-day admission to the Arboretum on Sunday prior to the event.

Tribute Wall

MW

“ Thoughts, prayers, and best wishes to everyone.

The Wilsons

Matthew Wilson - October 19, 2025 at 10:37 PM

ET

“ Dear family and friends of Lea, I am thinking of you as you prepare for her Memorial Playdate and wish I could join you in person. I wrote a tribute on Facebook that I won't reproduce here, but I pray that her spirit of joy, critique, playfulness, passion, bravery, adventure, and faith wraps around you and inspires you in unexpected ways all the rest of your lives.



Erika Tritle - October 19, 2025 at 02:30 PM

SJ

“ I only met Lea virtually a few months ago, when I interviewed her for a story and also attended a recent Playdate with Death. I am so sad to hear of her passing, and would like to share the piece with her loved ones if they are interested. Her work was so inspiring and she made such an impact on me in the two short chances we had to interact. Sending my love and condolences to her family and friends. (The article on her work can be found at <https://www.elderlawanswers.com/playdates-with-death-spirited-chats-on-end-of-life-planning-21272>.)

Stefanie Dion Jones - October 17, 2025 at 04:09 PM

RZ

“ *Ruben Zimmermann lit a candle in memory of Lea Faye Schweitz*



Ruben Zimmermann - October 13, 2025 at 03:42 PM

RZ

I was blessed to have worked with Lea at three summer camps run by the Enhancing Life Project (Chicago). She enriched not only me, but the whole group with her excellent scientific contributions and her warm, engaging, and refreshingly unpretentious character among scholars. I think of her with great respect and pray for her family.

Ruben Zimmermann - October 13, 2025 at 03:47 PM

RC

“ *Lea was a force of nature! Her energy and love always outshined the cancer, so much so that I never saw her as sick. That is why the news of her passing came as such a shock. I pray that everything she stood for, believed in, and shared with others will be the light we hold as we carry on without her. Always smiling and loving HUGE - that is how she will be remembered in my heart.*

Regina Carey - September 26, 2025 at 09:23 PM

EN

What a lovely tribute to Lea. May she remembered as a kind heart, who loved life and her family completely. I am honored to have been her friend.

Emily Norman - September 27, 2025 at 02:07 PM

MW

I'm so incredibly sorry to hear of Leah's passing. I've been following her journey on CaringBridge and I'm just so heartbroken to hear this news! Our two families met when our boys played baseball together in Hyde Park. Such a sweet and kind soul gone too soon! Sending loving thoughts of peace and comfort to all who loved her at this time of extraordinary grief. -The Wessel Family

Meaghan Ward - September 27, 2025 at 07:40 PM

MM

I recently met Leah at a networking event online. I was so impressed with her energy and inspiration. It was a blessing to me and to all connected. Fly freely, Leah. May all you ignited in us carry you far.

Marggie Moertl - October 13, 2025 at 11:16 AM