

Memorial Minute for Kathleen Helbling (Broadmead)

September 18, 1942 – May 17, 2025

Kathleen Helbling was a beloved member of Broadmead Friends Meeting. She and her husband, Paul, sought out a Quaker community in 2009 after meeting a Quaker while volunteering. After finding Broadmead Friends, they quickly became active participants. She often found the silence of Quaker worship difficult but she persevered in her search for ways to center down and find peace in the silence. Kathleen had a big voice and an even bigger heart! She was curious, engaging, and accepting of every new person who came to Quaker meeting.

Kathleen Tarr was born in Los Angeles, and her life in childhood and as a young woman involved many moves back and forth across the country. She had health problems as a child and often, being unable to play outside, spent much of her time reading. Books were her solace and her friends.

After a first marriage, three children, and a difficult divorce, Kathleen moved back to Michigan with her youngest daughter. These were difficult times, but she persevered and returned to college to enhance her education degree. After getting a bi-lingual certification from Michigan State, she moved to Arizona and began her teaching career at an inner-city school in Phoenix. She taught elementary and junior high students and loved teaching and learning throughout her life.

It was in Arizona that she met and married Paul Helbling, a man who shared many of the same social justice concerns. Their concerns led them to take the Community Peacemaker Teams training to work with No More Deaths on the southern border. In their volunteer work they provided water and other lifesaving assistance to undocumented people crossing the Arizona desert on foot. Kathleen and Paul moved to a small farm near Liberty Center, Ohio in 1999, where they had a large garden for many years and shared the bounty with local food pantries. Following a 2018 Broadmead retreat, Kathleen and Paul were inspired by the retreat leader to begin growing medicinal herbs and shipping them to a group supporting health education for the African American communities at high risk of negative environmental influences.

After retirement, Kathleen often used the small library in Liberty Center as a way to meet local people with different points of view. She also persuaded a friend to start a Facebook page on current and political topics. She thought there should be a place where people could express differing views on current events in a polite and reasonable way.

Kathleen served Lake Erie Yearly Meeting as well as Broadmead Friends. She began on the LEYM Peace & Justice Committee and then accepted an appointment to represent LEYM at the American Friends Service Committee. She kept us informed of AFSC activity and encouraged us to engage with actions on the national level.

In Broadmead, Kathleen was a member and then co-clerk of the Ministry and Nurture Committee, a member of our Earthcare Interest Group, and our representative to AFSC.

Kathleen loved bringing Friends together for social events such as their annual “corn fest,” game nights around their kitchen table, apple picking from their bountiful trees, or impromptu lunches at local restaurants. Kathleen recognized the need for fun in an often harsh world. Everyone was always welcome and Kathleen encouraged lively discussions!

As Kathleen's health issues became more frequent, she slowed down her many physical activities around the farm. About three months before her death, after months of rehabilitation therapy, which failed to help her regain strength, and faced with living in a nursing home, she chose to go home to the farm with hospice and family care. There Kathleen continued to welcome visits with friends and family and comforted us with her sense of peace and optimism about her next journey.

Kathleen was a kind and generous soul who loved her large family and her wide circle of F/friends. She is deeply missed.