



## Darla S. Gillespie

August 25, 1959 - February 13, 2010

Kalispell, Montana: Darla Sue Gillespie, age 50 formerly of Glendive, Montana, loving mother, grandmother, sister and friend passed away on Saturday, February 6, 2010 at her home in Kalispell. Visitation will be held from 10:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M. until 7:00 P.M. on Friday, February 12, 2010 at the chapel of the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home in Glendive. A Life Tribute service will be held at 7:00 P.M. on Friday, February 12, 2010 at the chapel of the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home in Glendive with Celebrant Sandy Silha officiating. Funeral services will be held at 10:00 A.M. on Saturday, February 13, 2010 at Zion Lutheran Church in Glendive with Pastor Avis Anderson officiating. Interment will follow in Dawson County Cemetery in Glendive. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive has been entrusted with the arrangements. Darla was born August 25, 1959, in Emmetsburg, Iowa to Harvey and Arlene (Gidel) Schmidt. She moved to Loveland, CO with her family in 1965, and then relocated to Kalispell, MT in 1970 with her mother and sisters. She graduated from Flathead High School in Kalispell in 1977. She married Brian Miller in 1980, they had two daughters, Janna and Jodie. The couple later divorced. A second marriage in 1986 to Joe Gillespie moved her and the two girls to Glendive, MT. In 1989, they had a son, Jesse. The couple recently divorced. She attended Dawson Community College where she graduated with an Associate of Applied Science degree in Human Services in 1996. Darla worked for the Seventh Judicial District as a Victim-Witness Advocate in Glendive. In 1997 she was awarded as an

Outstanding Crime Victim Honoree by the Montana Department of Justice. She went back to Dawson in 1998 to earn another Associate of Applied Science degree in law enforcement. Her latest employment was with Restoration in Youth Justice in Kalispell. She enjoyed traveling, sewing quilts, golfing, snow and water skiing, boating and camping at Lake Sakakawea and was brave enough to sky dive. Darla was a loving and devoted mother and grandmother, a very detail oriented person and a perfectionist. She provided her children with constant love, support and guidance. Darla's life was her family as evidenced by the love they shared for each other. She is survived by her daughter Janna McCormick and husband, Trevor; daughter Jodie Miller; and son Jesse Gillespie, all of Glendive, MT; mother Arlene Schmidt, Polson MT; brothers Darwin Schmidt and Darrel Schmidt, Loveland, CO; sister Darcie Harris and husband Rex, Kalispell, MT; brother-in-law Charles Canham, Loveland, CO; special friend James Reeher and daughter Shayla Reeher, Kalispell, MT; nieces and nephews, Shanna Schmidt, Kaitlyn Schmidt, Ian Jones, Kale Canham grandchildren Adison and Hannah McCormick, Carrie Thornton and Nathan Butler. Darla was preceded in death by her father Harvey Schmidt, sister Darnel Canham, and nephew Derick Schmidt, all of Loveland, CO. Remembrances and condolences may be shared with the family at: [www.silvernale-silhafuneralhome.com](http://www.silvernale-silhafuneralhome.com). Darla Sue Gillespie Life Tribute Service Chapel of the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home Glendive, Montana February 12, 2010 Welcome: Master of Ceremonies Reading: Celebrant A Death Has Occurred (By Paul Irion) "A death has occurred and everything is changed by the event. We are painfully aware that life can never be the same again, that relationships once rich have ended. But there is another way to look upon this truth. If life went on the same without the presence of the one who has died, we could only conclude that the life we remember made no contribution, filled no space, meant nothing. The fact that the person left behind a place that cannot be filled is a high tribute to this individual. Life can be the same after a trinket has been lost, but life is never the same after the loss of a treasure." Darla Sue Gillespie was a treasure, and

her death has left a huge hole in the hearts of those who knew and loved her. No one can know all the sorrows that burden another person's heart. If love could have saved Darla, she would still be among us now, for Darla was greatly loved. As we grieve Darla's death, let us remember the passion with which she lived her life, the many good things she did, and the many lives and hearts she has touched. Darla's daughter, Janna McCormick would like to share a letter she has written to her mother, and then friend and first husband, Brian Miller, would like to share some thoughts about Darla. Speaker: Janna McCormick, Brian Miller Eulogy: Celebrant Darla Sue Gillespie lived life with passion and style. Competitive, detail-oriented and a perfectionist, Darla loved doing everything well, and truly enjoyed doing it better than anyone. Challenges brought out her competitive spirit, and she would test herself to show that yes, she, a girl, could do it! Darla was a strong presence with family, with friends, and in the workplace. And to everything she did and to all that knew her, Darla brought her witty sense of humor, her beautiful smile and her wonderful laugh. Darla's laugh was like a cackle, and it was contagious, making everyone around her laugh right along with her. Darla was all girl; she loved getting her hair done, having manicures, pedicures and dressing up in stylish clothes. Nothing was better than being pampered, with a favorite time being on the week-ends, when she could sleep in, with Joe cooking a breakfast of bacon, eggs, potatoes, and coffee. But this "all girl" girl was also tough and adventurous. She thrived on driving anything with an engine; jet skies, snowmobiles, her boat or riding motorcycles. Darla snow skied, water skied, and if you pulled up beside her driving on the street, Darla didn't wave, she was just as apt to rev her engine enticing you to race her. Darla enjoyed speed, evidenced by numerous speeding tickets collected over the years. Once, Darla made a trip to Miles City and back. Going over, she was ticketed for going 95mph; coming back she had slowed down to 92mph when clocked by the highway patrol. On a trip to Billings, Darla was pulling a car trailer when a patrolman stopped her for doing 93mph. He asked Darla if she knew she

was pulling a car trailer. Darla's comeback was "Oh, that's what's slowing me down!" And Darla was an expert at talking herself out of tickets. Another thing about putting Darla on the road, you didn't want to have her driving at night. She was a deer magnet. Ask Joe how many deer she hit and how many times she would call to have her family come and pick her and the vehicle up with the car hauler. And her pet peeve...backseat drivers. Darla was a night owl. Mornings weren't her thing. Neither was time, she tended to be late for everything. Darla had her own time zone. With her job, it wasn't 9 to 5 for Darla, it was whatever time was needed to do the job right, and with her family, she was on 24/7. Nineteen years after graduating from high school, Darla, always a straight A student, received her associate degree in Human Services. Two years later, she returned to college to earn an associate degree for Law Enforcement. During her studies at Dawson Community College, Darla also had a family to care for and a full time job. Susie Sampson, a co-worker and friend, wrote the following about Darla: "Darla worked as the Coordinator and Advocate for the 7th Judicial District Victim/Witness Program from 1995 through July of 2008. Victims of crime often find the criminal justice system can be rather confusing and difficult to understand. Darla's job was to assist those victims in understanding the criminal justice process and their rights as the victim, which included helping them apply for crime victim's assistance, preparing Victim Impact Statements to be presented at the time of the accused's sentencing, arrange for counseling, and applying for compensation. Darla also became a certified victim/offender mediator and mediated numerous cases throughout all of eastern Montana. In 1997, Darla received the Outstanding Crime Victim Advocate Award for outstanding work and dedication in advocating for victims of crime. That is what Darla's job was, but the following are things I remember and know about Darla: I remember Darla was a very detail oriented worker and on every case in which she was involved, she took impeccable notes, which by the way, SHE didn't really need because her memory was incredible! She was a very intelligent woman and good at her job. She always went out of her way to help people she worked

with. I remember her helping victims move, whether it be across town or out of town, using her personal vehicles and weekends off. On one occasion, I remember her actually loaning her personal clothes to a victim's family member so she could feel comfortable attending court. Darla always went out of her way for people but she never acted like it was any trouble. Because of that, most of her clients felt she was their friend and she was always receiving wedding announcements, graduation announcements, birth announcements, and thank you cards in the mail from past clients, and she loved that. On a personal friendship level, I always knew Darla was someone I could count on for anything! She was always giving and kind to me. Darla had a great sense of humor and we shared a lot of laughter. I admired Darla's fearlessness and sense of adventure. I respected her determination and drive. Darla adored her family. I would like her family to know that she talked of all of them all the time...they were her pride and joy. I cannot express how much I will miss her." Susie Sampson. Darla's love and pride for her family has been mentioned by virtually everyone. Her two daughters, Janna and Jodie, and her son, Jesse, her grandchildren, Carrie, Nathan, Adison, and Hannah were her life. Darla was very giving of her love and her time. She was supportive, she challenged them, she taught them, she played with them, she laughed with them. One particular incident the kids remember was shopping with their mother in Billings at the mall on Grand. The mall had a kids play area with a big foam train for the children to play on. The train had a small window and Jodie and Jesse could crawl through the window just fine, but Janna almost got stuck. Darla told the kids that she was going to crawl through the window, and they told her no, Janna had almost not made it through the window, surely, Darla who was bigger, would get stuck. Darla assured her children that she could make it. Well, she couldn't, and the kids got hysterical with laughter and embarrassment at the sight of their mother stuck in the train window with a mall full of people looking. Even Darla laughed at herself over that one. The family, for years, took annual train trips to Kalispell to snow ski with cousins, aunts and uncles. Christmas was a memorable time for the family because

Darla loved that time of year and really went all out. Her details were exquisite. Darla decorated to the max. The week of Christmas, the tablecloths came out, a different one each day. Special plates, silver, and glasses were used. Darla handmade the bows and labels for the wrapped gifts. And the gifts were everything anyone could want. Janna's birthday is four days before Christmas, and Darla always made sure Janna's birthday had its proper place as an event, never overshadowed by the Christmas holiday. One Christmas, Darla spent all of Christmas Eve night putting together all the blocks of a quilt she was making for Jesse. Darla worked until 6am so Jesse could open the gift when he awoke Christmas Day morning. And then Darla was a bit annoyed because one of she blocks was off by an eighth of an inch. She had wanted it perfect for her son! As for Jesse, he admired and enjoyed his mother's stubborn, determined and right back at you attitude. He can smile at the many times they raced their vehicles, or when his mom would show him that whatever he could do, she could do too, and sometimes do it even better than he could. He was right there with his mom in her love of cars, powerful engines, and motor sports. He liked watching his mom take on challenges and conquering them. He smiles at her attempts to discipline him, claiming she could never follow through on spanking him. He does remember one incident that his mom would remind him of. Darla collected snow globes, and displayed them throughout the house. Jesse had some friends over and they were goofing around in the basement with some air soft guns that shoot plastic BBs. As will happen, the goofing around escalated into an all out war with BBs flying everywhere. Consequently, a couple of the snow globes were broken. Mom was not happy, and she did not forget! But the strength of her presence as a mother was in the love and support she offered her children. Jodie moved around a bit, and Darla was always there to help. If she noticed Jodie needed something for her family, Darla would immediately see that she had it. Something that Jodie loved about her mother was Darla's smile and her laugh. Darla gave out many a smile and she loved to share a good laugh. An

adventure with her mother that sticks in Janna's mind happened when Janna was in high school. Joe and his friends went rafting down the river to Intake where Darla was to pick them up. When Joe called for the pick-up ride, Darla asked Janna to ride along. They were to pick Joe up on the slow side. Janna, who wasn't supposed to know where the slow side was because of the high school parties held there, found herself directing her mother over the road. Well, they missed the turn, it was getting dark, and it started storming. As they turned the car around, Darla hit a culvert and blew out a tire. Stranded with no cell service, not knowing where they were, Darla and Janna got out and began walking. They ended up in a pasture with a herd of cattle. It was pitch black by then, and Janna had a fear of UFO's. So of course Darla started looking at the sky and saying, "What was that? Did you see that?" Janna was not a happy camper. Finally, they established cell service and Joe came and got them, and they got home about 3am. Darla could turn a simple errand into an adventure. Jesse called it the "snowball effect" because for his mother, if one thing went wrong, everything went wrong. Janna, too, will miss her mother's smile. She will also miss sharing clothes, and the pampering of themselves they both enjoyed. Janna's husband, Trevor, observed that Darla and Janna's relationship was more than just a mother-daughter relationship; it was a friendship. Trevor says that when Janna introduced Trevor to Darla, Darla's comment was that "no one was good enough for her daughters." But what Trevor and Darla had in common beside Janna, was a love of classic cars. Darla would get excited over Trevor's cars, and share in fixing them up, and being a part of the local car show. Another common interest, was of course, Darla's grandchildren. Darla was there for the birth of Jodie's older daughter, Carrie, as she was for Janna and Trevor's older daughter, Adison. Darla was a hands-on grandmother. She would read to her grandchildren, get down on the floor and play with them, ride the waterslide with them, give them wagon rides, and she loved to teach them songs and sometimes naughty things, and then give them back to their parents. She taught Carrie a hand sign to say "luv you". Nana and Adison would exchange videotexts to say their

goodnights. She and Adison also had a favorite outing of going to the Coffee Den for lattes and caramel rolls. Nathan enjoyed sharing popcorn with Grandma. One year, Darla made a special trip to help granddaughter Carrie celebrate her birthday at Halloween. They made a haunted house complete with decorations including a coffin and mannequin made of clothes stuffed with newspapers, and Darla was a great “wicked witch of the west.” Darla was a wonderful, proud and loving grandmother. It was the importance of their children that was the basis and beginning of a strong friendship between Darla and LaNette Simonton. They first met when their sons Jesse and Eric were very young and in AAU wrestling. They became the kitchen directors for the wrestling tournament each year here in Glendive. It was a big job, requiring organizational skills, hard work and a great deal of time. Darla and LaNette found they made a great team. They had the duties and things that needed to be done down to a science, and with the grunt work of their respective husbands, Joe and Dick, provided meals and concessions for over 400 young wrestlers and their families year after year. A bond of friendship developed from their shared sense of being able to depend on each other, work together, laugh together, and share the joys and tribulations of raising children. Jesse and Eric would bicker over which mother was meaner! This argument provided Darla and LaNette with much enjoyment and laughter. A strong bond of understanding, listening, support, fun, and friendship was formed that has lasted far beyond their kids. Even when there were lapses in communication, they could always pick things up right where they had left off. LaNette always admired Darla’s uncanny ability with numbers. Darla could remember phone numbers, and just had a knack when it came to anything with numbers or in noticing the significance of numerology. LaNette is really going to miss all the humor and wit of her friend, Darla, and also all the phone calls and texts they exchanged when one or both of them would be on the road. They truly were friends of the heart! Darla provided those around her with a great example of how to get things done in life. She attacked everything with enthusiasm, energy, a need and the skills to get it done right and the best

way she could. She appeared fearless in taking on life's opportunities. Always wanting to sky dive, she and her sister, Darcie, finally made that happen. After having to postpone this dream because of pregnancies, children, and life in general, finally a week-end came with nothing planned. Darla and Darcie decided that it was a good time to make it happen. Some of life's best plans are last minute and, for them, everything came together. After all the instructions and the wind settling down so they could do the jump, they entered the plane. Each was going to jump totally alone. Last into the plane would jump first, but who would go first? Darcie told Darla that if she didn't see Darla jump first, she didn't know if she could go. So Darla was last in and first to jump. Both completed their jumps, and their only regret was that they didn't immediately get back in the plane and do another jump. And that is just an example of the way Darla lived her life, fearlessly and waiting expectantly to have her breath taken away by the experience. Some favorite activities of Darla's not yet mentioned included reading books, especially ones by Danielle Steele; traveling, she visited Europe, and many places in the United States, quilting, golfing, and camping. She collected Boyd's bears along with the snow globes, and she loved her lattes. And no matter what she was doing or what they might be doing, Darla was on the phone talking and texting her family and friends constantly. She was never far away from those she loved. Yes, this passionate, loving, irrepressible woman with the giving heart and beautiful smile was a significant presence in the lives of those who knew her. She was greatly loved and she will be greatly missed by all.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Darla S. Gillespie*

---

December 07, 2022 at 04:10 PM