



Cindy Kreifels: A True Groundwater Champion

by Jennifer Wemhoff, Groundwater Foundation

Groundwater lost one of its longtime, passionate champions last fall when Cindy Kreifels, past Groundwater Foundation Executive Vice President, passed away after a long illness.

"Cindy blessed me with her unfailing kindness, authenticity, and amazing ability to create and focus all at the same time," said longtime friend and colleague and Groundwater Foundation founder Susan Seacrest.

Cindy started at the Groundwater Foundation in 1993 as the database manager. Over her 20+ years, she was instrumental in positioning the Foundation as a leader in youth groundwater education and community involvement and mobilization. She helped develop and lead the Groundwater Guardian program in its infancy and her personal dedication to the teams and citizens gave the program a solid foundation to have a lasting impact for more than 20 years (and counting).

Cindy wasn't afraid to get her feet wet, often literally, in delivering groundwater education. She was a vital part of many of the Foundation's youth programs, including Groundwater University, a groundwater summer camp, and other unique youth educational experiences that helped them appreciate groundwater's role in our world.

"Cindy was braver than any of us," recalls Seacrest. "She was the calm presence during a tornado warning a youth camp, spent the night with gorillas at the Henry Doorly Zoo, and saved me from myself as I ran wild with crazy ideas to save the world's groundwater!"

Former Foundation board member Cathy Lotzer of Marshfield, Wisconsin recalls Cindy's encouragement. "Cindy was the first at the Foundation to introduce herself to me and make me feel so welcome. She was also the one who encouraged me to get more involved, even serving as board chair, which was something I would have never dreamed of doing had Cindy not encouraged me along the way," Lotzer said. "She had a gift for making people feel that their voice was important. No matter how many times I told her that Marshfield was so small, how can we make a difference, she knew we could and would, and we did and still are."

As Executive Vice President, Cindy helped guide the Foundation's vision, fostered partnerships, oversaw grant implementation, brainstormed new ideas and efforts, and made sure the Foundation stayed true to its mission.

I first met Cindy as a college junior, interviewing for an internship. She



In Memory of
Cindy Kreifels

pushed me to take on new challenges, made my work better, and provided a sounding board for everything from presentations to grant reports and even motherhood. I'm grateful for Cindy in helping me become the professional I am today.

After the Foundation, Cindy worked at Orton Management Associates, providing oversight for the Nebraska Well Drillers Association, Nebraska On-Site Wastewater Association, and the Nebraska State Irrigation Association.

Cindy is survived by her husband of 38 years, Randy; her daughter Wendy and son-in-law Matt, and their children Brynn, Brett, and Drew; her son Cody, daughter-in-law Allison, and grandson Carter; her parents, Chuck and Sharon Rodeman; three siblings; and many other relatives and friends.💧

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