



Deborah Norris Matthews

May 22, 1937 - March 15, 2025

Deborah Ruth Norris Matthews, 87, passed away on March 15, 2025, after a short illness.

Debbie was a lifelong advocate for social justice, public service, and the arts. She marched with Martin Luther King and actively assisted with political campaigns, including those for George McGovern and Dick Celeste. Her extensive volunteer work included Godman Guild, Riverside Methodist Hospital, Kobacker House, Experience Columbus, the Memorial Tournament, and the Columbus Association for the Performing Arts. A longtime member of the Rebounders booster club for the Ohio State women's basketball team, she loved dressing in scarlet and gray.

Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on May 22, 1937, Debbie moved to Columbus in 1966. After raising her family and retiring from the Ohio Department of Taxation, she traveled the world. Debbie walked the Great Wall of China, cruised aboard a clipper ship, and journeyed to Australia to attend the 2000 Olympics and fly in a hot-air balloon. A lifelong learner, she visited Chautauqua Institution every summer, sharing a house with girlfriends and enjoying lectures and concerts. With her impeccable memory, Debbie made

friends and connections everywhere she went. Whether walking in downtown Columbus or exploring distant locales, she always seemed to bump into someone she knew.

A true music lover, Debbie performed with both the Village Singers and the Worthington Chorus for over two decades and would break into song at the slightest provocation, delighting onlookers and dismaying her children during their teenage years. Every summer, she spent a week on Cape Cod

at the Craigville Adult UCC Music Camp with her dearest childhood friend, Mary Ann Hermance. In Columbus, Debbie avidly attended and supported the Columbus Symphony, the Jazz Arts Group of Columbus, and ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, in addition to BalletMet, Thurber House, and the Ohio Theatre. During her many years as a member of Trinity United Methodist Church, she always rejoiced in the opportunity to sing beautiful hymns.

Devoted to family, Debbie had boundless pride and affection for her three children and their spouses, Douglas and Katherine Matthews, Susan and Ken Burger, and David and Tricia Matthews, as well as her seven grandchildren, their spouses, and her adorable great-grandchild: Henry and Ana Matthews, Will Matthews, Chris and Tara Burger, Maggie Matthews, Maddie and Carl and Quade Rassi, Audrey Matthews, and Grace Matthews.

Debbie delighted in the role of grandmother. When a grandchild reached their tenth birthday, she whisked them off on an adventurous trip, creating memories that just the two of them would share. At the time of her death,

Debbie was looking forward to welcoming two new great-grandchildren in 2025.

True to her Boston roots, she remained a Red Sox fan for her entire life. The daughter of Fenton Norris, a funeral director, and Lois (Woods) Norris, Debbie graduated from Winchester High School in 1955. Her New England family tree reaches all the way back to Peregrine White, born on the Mayflower in 1620, and includes Benjamin Franklin and the Coffin and Folger families of Nantucket Island. Her niece, Sheryl Norris, her grandnephew, Pete Norris, and her great-grandnephew, Reign Patrick Norris, still reside in the Boston area. She is also survived by her nephews, Stephen and Rick Norris. Debbie is preceded in death by her brother, Richard F. Norris, her sister-in-law, Maryalyce Norris, and her grandnephew, Patrick Norris.

Everyone who knew Debbie will fondly remember her brilliant smile, her gorgeous youthful complexion, her constant cup of black coffee, her unrivaled passion for a great bargain, her uncanny ability to remember everyone, and her unflagging faith in the necessity of equal rights for all, the power of kindness, and the sweet beauty of a cello concerto.

Calling hours: Friday, March 28, from 5 to 7 pm, at Rutherford-Corbin Funeral Home, 515 High St., Worthington.

Celebration of Life: Trinity United Methodist Church, 1581 Cambridge Blvd., Columbus, on Saturday, March 29, at 11 am.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to two of Debbie's favorite organizations: Godman Guild and Thurber House.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life Gathering

MAR 28. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Rutherford Corbin Funeral Home
515 High Street
Worthington, OH 43085

Celebration Of Life Service

MAR 29. 11:00 AM (ET)

Trinity United Methodist Church
1581 Cambridge Boulevard
Marble Cliff, OH 43212

Tribute Wall

MH

“ Susan, I am so sorry to learn of your mother's passing. I have not had any communication with her or you for many years, but have kept up on you both through mutual friends. All I can say is "What a Woman" , and kudos for a life well lived! I know she will be missed by many.

Mary Lou Holbrook

Mary L Holbrook - April 06, 2025 at 10:31 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Deborah Norris Matthews.

March 27, 2025 at 10:11 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Deborah Norris Matthews.



March 27, 2025 at 10:11 PM

DM

“ Delaney M. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Deborah Norris Matthews.

Delaney M. - March 26, 2025 at 07:54 PM

IJ

“ A note of appreciation, on behalf of Lois and Lester Jipp’s children. Deb was a dear friend, and a part our family, for more than 40 years. She is loved and will be missed.

ian Jipp - March 26, 2025 at 03:21 PM

BV

“ I will sure miss my singing buddy. Deb left an indelible mark on us here at Wesley Glen. - Brent Rayburn Velco (Wellness Manager)

Brent Rayburn Velco - March 26, 2025 at 02:25 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Deborah Norris Matthews.



March 24, 2025 at 04:01 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Deborah Norris Matthews.

March 24, 2025 at 04:01 PM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Deborah Norris Matthews.



March 22, 2025 at 02:22 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Deborah Norris Matthews.

March 22, 2025 at 02:22 PM



“ Deb and I worked together years ago at a mental health center. I knew her as a “spark plug,” one who initiated contact readily, planned events, remembered birthdays/anniversaries. She was unfailingly gracious, thoughtful, and sensitive, one of a kind. May her memory be eternal.

Elaine Rentel - March 21, 2025 at 07:54 PM



“ I fondly remember Debbie as a woman with an eternal smile and quick wit. She made friends with her smile and humor. Regardless of meeting at any event, she welcomed me and all with her friendship. Condolences and prays for her and family, friends.

Carol Pierce Mix - March 20, 2025 at 04:19 PM



“ 1 file added to the album International Dinner Group



Mary Helen Hart - March 20, 2025 at 02:14 PM

MH

“ *Debbie was a long time friend and member of the International Dining Group. She was loved by all of us and she will be remembered. She adored her grandchildren. She love women's basketball. She was a person who honored integrity and kindness in her personal life and her social life. We will miss her.*

Mary Helen Hart - March 20, 2025 at 02:12 PM

MD

“ *Michele Delaney & Judge Patricia Delaney purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of Deborah Norris Matthews.*



Michele Delaney & Judge Patricia Delaney - March 20, 2025 at 11:36 AM

DH

“ *Debbie was special!*

Forever young, curious, enthusiastic, giving, and loving.

I had the privilege of knowing her as a friend for many years as she served as a volunteer in so many causes and was involved in public affairs in Worthington and Ohio.

Rest in Peace Debbie

Doug Holmes - March 20, 2025 at 10:09 AM

CL

“ I was lucky to know Deb for decades , first through local politics, then as a community builder and lastly as a member of the McConnell Health Center. She made every day better by her vitality, kindness and devotion to our community.

Cindy Lazarus - March 20, 2025 at 07:16 AM

PS

“ We both knew Debbie from McConnells and would chat and laugh and talk politics in the locker room. We are so sorry to learn that she died.

Pat Semmelman and Freddie

Pat Semmelman - March 19, 2025 at 09:28 PM

EM

“ I'm sorry to hear of Debbie's passing. We worked together at the Ohio Department of Taxation. She was the best storyteller. In recent years we reconnected on Facebook. She couldn't believe I remembered the story about her nickname given by her father. RIP "Bedorah". ❤️🙏

Elaine McCoy - March 19, 2025 at 09:06 PM



“ I'll miss your positive energy Deb! Thank you for realizing we are related on the Coffin side of the family tree. It made my days at McConnell that much better with extra family beside me!! Right now, I hope your family can grieve your loss but also remember all the good times too. You were a special person and we were lucky to know you. My sincere condolences.

Kate Wightman - March 19, 2025 at 07:33 PM

FA

“ *Debbie was a delight to work with at the Ohio Department of Taxation. She was a wonderful person.* ”

Francie Estrada Adams - March 19, 2025 at 04:58 PM