



Donald Kenneth "Ken" Mitchell

October 14, 2012

Donald Kenneth "Ken" Mitchell, PhD., age 65, of Worthington, died Sunday, October 14, 2012. Managing Partner of WorkRx Group. Retired from Unum Corporation. Previously employed by National Rehabilitation Planners, Ohio Industrial Commission and former Associate Professor of Rehabilitation Counseling at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Ken earned his Doctorate's degree in Counselor Education from Penn State University, Master's degree from Bowling Green State University and Bachelor's from The Ohio State University. An avid bicyclist, Ken recently completed a 75 mile leg of the Pelotonia. A devoted family man, Ken will best be remembered as a fun and imaginative grandpa. Preceded in death by parents, Donald H. and Emma H. Mitchell. Survived by loving wife of 43 years, Ruth Ann Mitchell; daughters and sons-in-law, Karyn and Michael Miller, Stacey and Brian Kempa; grandchildren, Emily, Jack and Anna Miller, Jacob and Maggie Kempa; brother, Neil R. (Sherri) Mitchell; step-mom, Carole Mitchell; nieces and nephews. Friends may call 6-8 PM Wednesday, October 17, 2012 at Rutherford-Corbin Funeral Home, 515 High Street, Worthington. Memorial Service 11 AM Thursday at the Dublin Community Church, 81 West Bridge Street, Dublin. Rev. Robert Tussing and Chaplain Mary George-Whittle officiating. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to: Pelotonia.org (ID# km0103) in Ken's memory. Please visit www.rutherfordfuneralhome.com to send on-line condolences.

Tribute Wall



“ Donald Kenneth "Ken" Mitchell

January 28, 2023 at 10:24 AM



“ This is what your comments will look like when you post them. Feel free to ask qunteoss, share experiences, be cheeky (not too cheeky though I will be moderating these).

Margarito - January 06, 2013 at 12:00 AM



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Isabel - October 23, 2012 at 12:00 AM

LC

“ Dear Ruth Ann and Family, My deepest condolences and prayers are with you. In the short time I knew Ken, I was deeply touched by his friendship and mentoring during a trying time in my life. His warmth, wisdom, generosity, humor and kindness and focus on action inspired me. He always spoke so lovingly and in admiration of his family and especially the time he shared with Ruth Ann. Ken was so committed to putting his beliefs into action; he was the change he wanted to see in the world. I am forever grateful to have known him and thank you for the time you shared him with us. Linda Cocchiarella

Linda Cocchiarella - October 22, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BF

“ To the family of Ken Mitchell -- I have never met any of you but please know that I knew Ken Mitchell as a professional colleague since the 1980s. He was a font of wisdom, a mentor, and a friend to many of us in the field of disability management. The field is larger for his accomplishments and smaller for his loss.

Bruce Flynn - October 20, 2012 at 12:00 AM

DH

“ Ken was a good friend from high school in Elyria through his adult life I would visit him at OSU and stayed in his dorm room. Later in life when things went badly for me I left Phoenix and moved to Columbus, he and Ruth Ann opened their home to me and let me stay there until I found a job and a place to live. I was looking forward to seeing him again on my next trip to Cleveland. A good man and I will miss him.

Dave Horwitz - October 19, 2012 at 12:00 AM

DG

“ Dear Neil and Family, I was saddened to hear about Ken, and my thoughts go back to the old days growing up on Emerson Ct. You, Ken and your parents were great neighbors, and although I lost track of Ken, by all accounts, he had a meaningful and productive life. I'll remember him rock'n with his electric guitar! God Bless,
Dave

Dave Gnizak - October 18, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JR

“ To: Ruth Ann, Karyn, Stacey, and family, Hal and I are devastated to learn of Ken's death. Ken knew how to take advantage of opportunities and challenges with amazing creativity. Ruth Ann, we feel that we are better people because we spent a few years being with the two of you! With love, Jo and Hal Robinson, Signal Mt., TN

Jo Robinson - October 18, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ Although we have not seen Kenny in years, our memories from Jefferson Jr High are fond ones, including the three piece combo he played in with Don and PJ. Jefferson was a special place and time for all of us from the west side. Our condolences to the family for your loss and most certainly heavens gain. Jim and Shery (Sprague) Smith

Jim and Shery Sprague Smith - October 18, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BB

“ Ruth Ann I was deeply saddened to hear of Ken's passing. Though I knew him in a work environment it was clear that his life was about his family. I don't know if you will remember me but I met you many years ago at Sundance where you and Ken were guests of Provident early in Harold Chandler's reign. I was a photographer and video producer there for many years and though I didn't work in Ken's area we I did have the chance to work together from time to time on various projects. He was always a genuine pleasure to work with and such a refreshing relief to the typical corporate culture. I always knew I was talking to the unfiltered "real" Ken and we became good friends. He was a class act and a nice man. You and your family were truly fortunate to have had him in your lives. He will always be one of my happy memories.

Bruce Bollinger - October 18, 2012 at 12:00 AM

LS

“ I was so sorry to learn of your husbands death. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. Liz and Tom Sturges

Liz sturges - October 17, 2012 at 12:00 AM

LC

“ Dear Ruth Ann and family, Please accept my sympathy for your great loss. Losing someone you have loved for so long is one of the most challenging and difficult moments in our lives. May God be with you as you travel on this sad journey. Love, Linda Coe, WAAL

Linda Coe - October 17, 2012 at 12:00 AM

PB

“ Ruth Ann; I am so, so sorry for your loss. I am thinking of you and your family, this is so hard. I had the pleasure of working (with some playing of course) with Ken first as a colleague at Unum and then as a stakeholder and participant in his various initiatives post Unum. Ken was and will be a difference maker, be it when testifying at a Senate HELP committee, speaking to co workers, benefits staff or benefits mangers. He was always one step ahead of the industry, proposing the next best idea and solution to improve and support individual productivity and return to work outcomes. He was a natural teacher and mentor, always patient, kind and generous with his time. He always talked about you, the girls their spouses, and grandchildren...the vacation trips to the beach and his role as the perfect Santa Claus (my words), and how proud he was of your accomplishments as an artist. We are all motivated to continue his work as his legacy - he would not have it any other way.

Phil Bruen - October 17, 2012 at 12:00 AM

MD

“ RuthAnn and family: It is with great sadness that I send you this note. Ken was a very special human being and I am proud to have known him as a mentor and friend. In our many years of working together, he always saw the positive. He always had a smile and twinkle in his eye, most often when he spoke of all of you. What a proud husband, parent and Grandpa he was. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Melissa Davey - October 17, 2012 at 12:00 AM

DT

“ I celebrate Ken's full life and contribution to his family and community. Ken was a good H.S. 'mate' and he will be missed by all of the EHS Class of '65.

Doug Thatcher - October 17, 2012 at 12:00 AM

CK

“ Dear Ruth Ann and family, We are so saddened by Ken's passing. What a remarkable and much loved man. We are in DC this week and as such will miss the service. We want you to know that we send our hugs and prayers and feel your loss. With our love, Candy and Doug

Candy and Doug Kennedy - October 17, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JC

“ We are so sorry to hear about Ken's passing, our sincere condolences to his family. When we moved to Elyria in 1964, we lived next door to the Mitchell's on Emerson Court and Ken was always providing direction and guidance in some form or another. I will always remember his great attitude about life and how he treated people. John Carney

John & Phyllis Carney - October 17, 2012 at 12:00 AM

TH

“ I met Ken several years ago at work. He will be fondly remembered as a thought leader and an inspiration to Disability Management practice. He was incredibly generous with his time and a true mentor during my studies at McGill. So sad to hear this news... my thoughts are with his family.

Toni Harrington - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

PN

“ Dear Ruthanne, Joe and I were saddened to hear of Ken's death. Please know that we are thinking about you. Sincerely, Paula Nees and Joe Wheaton

Paula Nees - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

MC

“ Dear Ruth Ann and family: Phil Bruen called me on sunday night to relay the tragic news of Ken's passing. He was truly a legend in our industry, leading the way from the very early years when I met him in the development of my organization, DMEC. He was an inspirational moderator for our highly sucessful Virtual Education Forum and often a speaker at our National Conference. His insight will be missed. KNow we are thinking of you during these very hard days and hope the future brings some peace in the knowledge that he made a huge contribution professionally. Most sincerely, Marcia Carruthers and all at DMEC

Marcia Carruthers - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BG

“ Ruth Ann and Family, We are so sorry to hear of Ken's passing and offer our prayers and condolences. Ken was one of the finest men I ever had the pleasure to work with. His loss is a loss to this world and he will be missed. Bob & Sue Greving

Bob & Sue Greving - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JC

“ I have known Ken since 1975 when he worked at Highlandview Hospital. Our careers have touched over the years, from his days at the Rehabilitation Division to Unum, through the TBI - Resource Opportunity Center and even through DMEC. Ken was always kind, thoughtful and professionally a gentleman. He was admired by all how met him. It was a honor to know him.

Joe Cannelongo - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JH

“ Ken was one of the nicest men I've had the pleasure of calling a friend. He was a model for a good husband, father, grandfather and friend. I am sad for his (in my opinion, early) death. My thoughts are with Ruth Ann and the family.

Jim H - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BN

“ I met Ken only through phone conversations and then briefly in person this summer in Maine. There are times when you meet people and get an immediate impression while for others it takes much longer. With Ken, it was immediate and it was evident he was one of the "good" people. He exhibited integrity, honesty and dedication in all our interactions. My warm and sincere condolences to his family and friends.

Ben Ness - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

CD

“ Dear Ruth Ann and family, I was so sorry to read about Ken's death and extend my deepest sympathy to all the family. Coming just after your inspiring ride in the Pelatonia, it is a shock. Blessings, Carol Hershey

Carol Hershey Durell - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

CD

“ Ruth Ann, you and the family are in Lynn and my prayers. Of the men I have known Kenny was among the very best. Our lives were kept apart over the years but still that friendship was always there. I loved him like a brother and will miss him so very much.

Chuck Derringer - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BW

“ I was touched by Ken Mitchell early in the 90’s. I had contacted Don Galvin to find who was the “Guru” on DM and he put me in touch with the master. I was told Ken invented the word DM with his early work with New Zealand. We hooked up in the day where we had to transfer information via ASCE files and moved to the generation of SKYPE. No one can put into words Ken’s skill at mentoring and developing talent and corralling disciples for pioneering the field of RTW and Integrated Disability Management. His keen sensitivity to anticipating the needs of his mentorees were incredible. And then, there were the endless stories which all were instructive, humorous and pertinent. Anyone touched by Ken’s interaction were enamored by his humility, warmth and kindness yet overflowed with knowledge and insight. He walked the talk. He toasted with wine and dined with you in mind. His skill at engagement was uncanny. He was brilliant, gifted, a thought leader, speaker, researcher, mentor, pioneer, advocate and much more. I once introduced him as “user friendly”. He made you feel like you were his high school buddy and if years passed it was like you never missed a beat. I was blessed to know him and drank his gospel. I invite all his disciples to step up and carry on his legacy in all the capacities that he reached: government, academic, political, research, scholar, labor and right down to the small employer, a city of 22 employees to the Fortune 500 with multiple unions. We need to carry on the torch in is memory. Ken will be deeply missed by all who touched his life, especially his wife and grandchildren who always came first in line in his book. We love you Ken. You were always so giving, and so kind. I hope to emulate your dedication and passion for life and your mission for your profession

Barb Wleklinski - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JC

“ I first met Ken and his wife Ruthanne about 25 years ago in Perth Western Australia. I was organising an international rehabilitation conference with Ken as the keynote speaker. I recall spending time with Ken during that visit and the Ohio State Buckeyes Cap he gave me. A more intelligent, humble, kind and friendly person than Ken would be hard to find. His passion for his work, his desire to help, mentor and share the benefits of his knowledge and experience was unparalleled. I had the honour of spending several days with Ken earlier this year in Tennessee and even though it had been over 25 years since we had seen each other it was like meeting a long lost buddy. We joked and talked and it was as if no time had passed. I mentioned that I had found the old Buckeyes cap a few months back stored away and he promptly took me to a sports store and bought me a new one. This is but a little example of Ken's generosity and I wear the cap proudly. My work afforded me the opportunity to speak, email and Skype with Ken and I will dearly miss his advice and counsel. To Ruthanne and the extended Mitchell family I wish to pass on my deepest sympathy and condolences at your loss. The memory of Ken's good deeds and the legacy of his work and those he influenced will live on. He will be missed by many.

Joseph Carrello - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

CD

“ Dear Ruth Ann, I don't even know what to say. I am so saddened to hear of Ken's passing. We shared so many good times together, I am in shock. Please know that Joe and I are thinking of you and your beautiful family at this very hard time. Ken was a terrific person, fun to be with, with a great zest for life. I know you will miss him terribly and I pray you will find the strength to get through the days ahead. May the memories of all the years you shared sustain you.

Cheryl Dresnok - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BB

“ just the other day, bob showed me a printout he had saved that you, ruth ann, had given us, which was a transcript of a speech that ken gave at the provident sundance sales awards conference in utah in 1998. you passed it along because, in it, ken talked about what it was like to return to work after "a collision between career and life style". it was such a help to bob and i because it reflected on what big hearts both our husbands had and how those hearts were damaged...and how the men bounced back! in the speech, ken talked about the really important things in life and how ken wanted to be remembered for them and not for just for who he was from 9-5 at work! he will be remembered as being the big-hearted, straight-talking, warm and positive person he always was. we were all blessed to know him. lucky you and the girls had the best part of him all the time. you are all in our prayers. love, karen and bob brezing

bob and karen brezing - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

SL

“Ruth Ann, Karyn, and Stacey, my heart and my deepest sympathies go out to you and your entire family. I will miss my buddy. Ken and I worked closely and successfully for ten years, as business partners and as wonderful friends. We knew each other’s little quirks that made us who we are and we were able to push each other gently, but firmly, during challenging times. We enjoyed a mutual respect and admiration; not necessarily due to our business acumen or technical skills, but because we both were dedicated to doing the right thing and doing it to the best of our ability. I remember being able to glance at Ken in the midst of a heated meeting and we were instantaneously able to communicate our thoughts and how we were going to maneuver this meeting back onto a beneficial path. More recently, when we reminisced about our partnership that ended in 1997, we remarked how we had never quite achieved the “magic” again working with someone else, other than experiences we have had with our own family members. When I think about Ken, I realize that his most important professional work lives on in the activities of employers, unions, insurers and others who have been charmed by his passion, touched by his unassuming brilliance, and amazed by his delightful audacity to challenge the way they operate. His best work, however, will live on in the hearts of his family members, people with disabilities, and friends whose lives he touched deeply . . . as he did mine. Norma and I both send our love to all of you.

Steve Leclair - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ Dear Ruth Ann, daughters, grandchildren and other beloved family and friends of Ken, Today, the 16th of October 2012 I was deeply moved to receive the sad message that Ken has passed away. I had the privilege to meet Ken in March 2009 on an annual conference of the DMEC. As from that moment on we kept in contact, by Skype and mail. He introduced me with more than great enthusiasm in his work and ideas. His warm personality and bright ideas have made great impact on me as a person and my work in the Netherlands. Ken had the unique ability in our business relation to preserve everyone, every problem, every situation with an open mind free from judgment and with an exceptional energetic attitude. In October 2011 we met for the last time in person in Chattanooga. We made further plans to enroll the JI in the Netherlands, our last contact dates from a few months ago, I just recently, the 21th of September, received his new format for the RTW JI, starting off for further development of this unique program. Next to our business engagement we had planned to meet each other, during stay in April 2013 in the Netherlands..... Fate has decided otherwise. Words can not express the los of a man who has impressed and inspired me and many others in a very special way. His memory therefore will be as a shining star in the universe, bright and special. “The word of eternity can only be heard in silence”. With great respect and very heartfelt sympathies, Jan Stoffijn, Groenedijk 17, 3311 DB Dordrecht

Jan Stoffijn - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BK

“ I'm blessed, above and beyond to be one of the many, many beneficiaries of Ken's keen mind, passion for mentoring, and genuine caring. The world has lost a very special man. My prayers for comfort for all Ken's family and community now and all the days ahead.

Bettina Kilburn - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

DK

“ I was very sad to hear of Ken's passing. He was a good, good man and an inspirational colleague. I wanted to extend my heartfelt sympathy for your loss. He will be missed.

Dodi Kelleher - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

CH

“ I've known Ken for about 15 years. While we worked for most of that time at "competing disability insurance companies," Ken became a trusted friend and colleague. I will greatly miss having him in my life. My sincere sympathies on your loss of Ken from your lives. He will live on through all of you.

Carol Harnett - October 16, 2012 at 12:00 AM

DR

“ RuthAnn, and family: We will miss Ken forever...he was such a great guy and so much fun to spend time with! We will never have homemade cherry pie without remembering how much he enjoyed eating it!

Donald G. & Robin Lee Rose - October 15, 2012 at 12:00 AM

MM

“ Our hearts and prayers are with you, Ruth Ann, and your family. Hold on to all the good memories and you'll never be alone. Marlen & Virgil

Marlen & Virgil Mathias - October 15, 2012 at 12:00 AM

MW

“ Beautifully said. How blessed you all are for having him as a husband, father, grandfather and friend. Ken you will be so missed by all who knew you best. You touched so many lives.

Mary Williamson - October 15, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JZ

“ I knew Ken when he worked with Care Clinic in Urbana IL and developed programs with Barb Wleklinski. He was not only bright and talented, he was extremely kind and generous. He will be missed

Joan Zernich - October 15, 2012 at 12:00 AM