



Debra Ann Kirsch

July 7, 1947 - March 28, 2026

DEBBIE KIRSCH - Debra Ann Kirsch died on March 28, 2026, at Ellis Hospital, Schenectady, after a short illness. She was 78.

A proudly independent woman devoted to the parish of Saint Vincent de Paul, Albany, in which she was received as a Catholic, Debbie led a life nourished by close friendships, music, books, and faith. Although challenged by scoliosis, Debbie let nothing keep her from pursuing her career nor, in retirement, her passions.

Born in Queens to Robert Kirsch, a high school administrator, and Alice Kirsch, Debbie was raised in Oceanside, NY in a household that prized education. She was attached to her two siblings, Linda and Jeffrey, who predeceased her. But it was music that lifted her spirits most profoundly. She remembered as a child being taken to Broadway matinees like "South Pacific" and "The King and I." Later, as a devotee of Brahms, Debbie took up the clarinet, guitar, and choral singing. Attaining a Masters degree in Library Science at the University of Albany, Debbie found a new home upstate where she formed indissoluble bonds through music and worship.

Most of Debbie Kirsch's professional life was spent at the library of Russell Sage College in Troy, New York. Among other administrative responsibilities, she was Head of Reference, promoting the status of campus librarians. She

devoured works of science and spirituality as well as of children's fantasy and adult science fiction. She also indulged in murder mysteries of the tea-cozy variety.

In later years Debbie traveled less frequently, but she cheerily remembered trips with her family to the American Southwest, vacations with friends in the Adirondacks, concerts at Tanglewood, and sojourns to the United Kingdom to attend professional conferences. In Oxford she sought out sessions in bell-ringing. In Cambridge, she relished the singing of vespers at King's College Chapel. And she continued to travel in her mind. Reading about how other people behaved, in worlds real and imagined, kept her moral imagination engaged and her commitment to the needs of others not only vivid but paramount.

At the church of Saint Vincent de Paul, Debbie was a member of the choir for fifty years. She also served on the Parish Council. A beloved godmother to a number of young people in the Albany area, she joined in birthday celebrations, Sunday lunches after Mass, picnics and ad-hoc porch concerts where her friends gathered. Perhaps her most salient characteristic will turn out to have been her constancy of affection.

Survivors include a cousin, Sandy Rich, in Florida, and many devoted friends who gathered with her in the choir of the Church of Saint Vincent de Paul in Albany, New York.

Memorial services will be held 11 a.m., Friday April 17, 2026 at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 900 Madison Ave., Albany, NY. Relatives and friends are invited. If desired donations in Debbie Kirsch's name can be made to the Church of Saint Vincent de Paul, Albany.

Tribute Wall

KA

“ I met Debbie at the farmers market at the Crossings. I looked forward to seeing her zooming around on her scooter and always hoped she would stop by my stand for a chat. She was so warm, funny, friendly and interesting. She was a special person who brightened my day on many occasions. I remember her love of food and telling me that when growing up her family had strawberries paired with sour cream which I had never heard of before. She was delightful and interesting and will be greatly missed by anyone that had the great fortune to know her. Thank you for the memories Debbie. Love, Karen

Karen - April 16 at 09:20 PM

LC

“ Dear Debbie,

You accomplished so much during your lifetime both personally and professionally and touched so many people with your kindness and humor. You faced the great physical challenges and incredible pain in your life with such grace, acceptance, determination and that indomitable spirit of yours that you were a true inspiration to all who knew you.

But I think the thing you did best in life was being a friend. You made friends so easily and you were able to create the deep meaningful bonds that produced lasting life-long friendships with so many people. I was privileged to share your friendship for 44 years and the laughter and joy you brought to me during that time enriched my life beyond measure. But you weren't just there for the good times, you were always there in the tough times too with deep-felt love and support. You taught me so much about what true friendship is that the only way I can think to close this is with these words from a song from your favorite Broadway musical, of course, WICKED:

*"It well may be
that we will never meet again
in this life time,
so let me say before we part
so much of me
is made of what I've learned from you
and you'll be with me
like a hand print on my heart.
And now, whatever way our stories end
I know you have re-written mine
by being my friend. "*

I'll miss you Deb. Rest in peace and eternal joy my friend.

Linda C. - April 16 at 08:30 PM

“ I left Long Island for Albany to attend grad school at The College of Saint Rose and found the welcoming community of St. Vincent de Paul. My first friend was a choir member named Debbie. We both played guitar and I was paired with her, sharing a music stand. She kept me on track- making sure I was on the right page, capo on (or off), etc. We chatted together while the basses or tenors worked out their parts and became fast friends. She was 20 years my elder and became like a surrogate mother to me.

I later asked her to be my maid of honor and godmother to my first born. Being Debbie, she didn't stop there. Her love extended to my second born, to whom she stepped up to become an honorary godmother and very present guide in his life.

She had severe scoliosis which impacted her mobility over the years. She utilized a motorized wheelchair to get out and about and could be found zooming around The Crossings to watch the fish, ducks, and herons frolic in the pond, Trader Joe's for her food shopping, and the annual Old Songs Festival in the Altamont Fairgrounds where she always made a point to attend the shape note singing.

This winter, she suffered a horrific fall which landed her in Albany Med. She went on to a rehab facility in Schenectady where physical therapy seemed to be working. I watched her doing her exercises- walking across the room, and pedaling on the exercise bike less than 24 hours before she was taken to Ellis with respiratory distress, ultimately finding herself in the ICU with pneumonia.

I spent most of the last week with her, singing songs we both loved, recalling stories of her life well lived. (True confessions were revealed when I learned she actually hated the green floral dress I apparently made her wear as my maid of honor. We had a good laugh about that!)

She put up a valiant fight, but she never recovered. I was both honored and devastated to be present at her passing. Holy Week

will never be the same. I will forever read of Jesus breathing his last and giving up his spirit through the lens of this experience.

I grieve for myself and our friends who have lost this truly remarkable woman, but am joyful for her. She is out of the chronic pain that dominated her body for decades and is finally truly unconfined.

My friend, the great storm is over. Life up your wings and fly!

Cathi Butryn - April 03 at 11:48 AM

LP

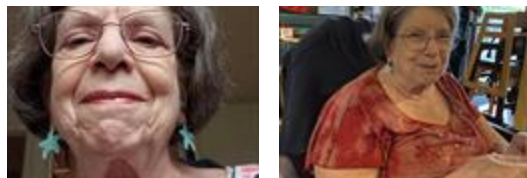
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Lisa Pitkin - April 03 at 10:24 AM

LP

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Lisa Pitkin - April 03 at 10:22 AM

CB

“ 5 files added to the tribute wall



Cathi Butryn - April 03 at 09:09 AM