



## Gary Benjamin

December 30, 1961 - May 8, 2026

Gary Benjamin, a beloved resident of Salem, IL, formerly Centralia, passed away in his home on Friday, May 8th, 2026, at the age of 64. Born on December 30th, 1961, Gary is the son of Donald Benjamin and Mary Ann (Huggins) Benjamin. On December 13, 1986 he married the love of his life, Kathleen Claar, at the Trinity Lutheran Church in Centralia. They shared 45 wonderful years together.

Gary is survived by his devoted wife, Kathleen Benjamin of Salem, and his loving son, Nicholas Benjamin, along with fiancée Dovie, of Salem. He also leaves behind his brothers, Kenny Benjamin and wife Julie of Kell, and Danny Benjamin and wife Vicky of Centralia, his sister, Penny Knepp of Kell, and his treasured grandchildren, Evie, Caspian, Faith, and Jenny and nephews Jordon Benjamin and Warren Knepp, both of Kell.

He was preceded in death by his many beloved pets over the years, his parents Donald and Mary Ann Benjamin, as well as his infant son Dakota Henry Benjamin, his nephew Josh Benjamin, and his stepbrother Bradley Benjamin.

Gary's professional life was marked by dedication and hard work as a Supervisor at Rockwell International in Centralia for many years. In his roles here he traveled around the country and even to Canada to consult at various

facilities. His former co-workers would stop him in public and say hello for decades after the factory closed. His commitment extended into the community as a member and Sunday School Teacher at the Trinity Lutheran Church in Centralia, an Assistant Scout Master for Troop 256 in Centralia and a PTL President at Trinity Lutheran School. Known for his passion as a Cardinals fan, he enjoyed mowing grass and working in the yard. Gary was also an excellent cook and baker for his family, and worked part-time as a bartender and cook at the AC Pitstop in Walnut Hill, a job he enjoyed very much as he was definitely a people person. Gary loved all animals and even wildlife were naturally drawn to him. His kind, loving, and generous nature touched all who knew him. He truly made people feel seen, appreciated and spread joy and love to everyone around him. He loved his wife Kathy more than anything. When his mobility became limited he had cameras installed around their home so he could keep an eye on her in case she fell or got hurt he could help her the best he could. Above all he loved his family, taking care of them, providing for them, especially making them happy.

A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date to honor the vibrant spirit of Gary Benjamin, who was a cherished member of the community.

In his memory, the family requests that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Trinity Lutheran School in Centralia, and will be accepted by the Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home, 235 North Sycamore Street Centralia, IL 62801, (618)532-3523, who is honored to be of service to Gary's family. Online condolences may be made by visiting [www.sutherlandfuneralhome.com](http://www.sutherlandfuneralhome.com) and the funeral home Facebook page. To send flowers or a memorial gift to the family, please visit our Sympathy Store.

Gary Benjamin will be fondly remembered and deeply missed by his family, friends, and all who had the privilege of knowing him. May his soul rest in peace.