



Barbara D. Heilala

November 5, 1944 - May 27, 2025

Barbara D. Heilala of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, passed away peacefully on May 27, 2025, at the age of 80, after a protracted illness related to a rare, late-in-life diagnosis of Type 1 Diabetes.

Robert F. Heilala (Bob) of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, passed away peacefully on June 13, 2025, at the age of 81, just two and a half weeks after his beloved wife, Barbara.

Bob was born in Marquette, Michigan, in August of 1943, to Andrew and Lorraine Heilala, the middle child between his older brother, James, and younger brother, Donald. He grew up in Republic, Michigan, spending time in the woods helping his father cut pulpwood and sharing adventures with his lifelong friends Curtis and Biff. Bob graduated high school and went on to attend Michigan Tech, where he studied accounting. After graduation, he moved to Detroit and began working for the Internal Revenue Service.

Barbara was born in Detroit, Michigan, in November of 1944 to Joseph and Loretto McDonald and was the youngest sister to Ann and Joan. She attended Immaculata High School and graduated from the University of Detroit with a degree in education. She later earned a master's degree at the University of Michigan.

It was in Detroit that Bob and Barb met, fell in love, and married in 1971. They welcomed their son, Mark, in 1979.

Barb's professional passion was educating children. She taught tirelessly in the Detroit Public Schools for 32 years, working with students from

kindergarten through second grade. Not content to retire, she became the librarian at Detroit Country Day Lower School in Bloomfield Hills, where she worked for an additional 11 years. There, she shared her deep love of reading and children's literature with everyone she encountered. Barb touched the lives of countless children with her seemingly endless enthusiasm and relentless dedication.

Barb loved her home in Bloomfield Hills and was an avid gardener. She treasured time with her husband and son, especially family camping trips and ski adventures in northern Michigan. Fall Saturdays were devoted to attending University of Michigan football games with longtime friends, where she always insisted on tailgating and brought elaborate spreads of homemade food-including her much-loved and ever-present brownies.

Bob spent 35 years as an IRS agent. He was active in Scouting with Troop 1022 and loved camping trips with his son. In retirement, Bob enjoyed golfing and sharing lunches with friends. He had a lifelong fondness for country music, westerns, and history documentaries.

Together, Barb and Bob traveled extensively in retirement, exploring North America-including Alaska and Canada-as well as destinations abroad such as China, the Holy Land, and Europe. They also loved spending time with their son, Mark, and daughter-in-law, Amy, at their home on Walloon Lake in Petoskey, Michigan.

Barbara and Bob shared a deep faith throughout their lives and were active parishioners at St. Owen Catholic Church in Bloomfield Hills. Barb was also deeply involved in her Catholic women's group, the Cabrini Guild, as well as the Christ Child Society.

Towards the end of her life, Barb devoted much of her energy to caring for her husband, Bob, who was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis and required supplemental oxygen at home, as well as her older sister, Ann, who was living with metastatic breast cancer in an assisted living facility.

For the final eight months of their lives, their son, Mark, and daughter-in-law, Amy, relocated to Bloomfield Hills to care for Barb and Bob during a long and

complicated hospital and nursing home stay.

Their lives will be celebrated at a memorial Mass at St Owen Catholic Church in Bloomfield Hills MI on Saturday, September 20th at 11:00 am with a luncheon to follow.

Barb and Bob had big hearts, generously giving their time and resources to help people and causes close to them, especially those less fortunate.

Consider a donation in their honor to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen to help feed those in need.

Previous Events

Memorial Mass

SEP **20**. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Owen Catholic Church
6869 Franklin Road
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48301

Tribute Wall



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Barbara D. Heilala.*



September 19, 2025 at 03:54 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Barbara D. Heilala.

September 19, 2025 at 03:36 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Barbara D. Heilala.*



September 19, 2025 at 03:36 PM



“ *Bethanne B. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Barbara D. Heilala.*

Bethanne B. - September 19, 2025 at 07:25 AM

JS

“ My condolences to Mark, Amy, and loved ones of Barbara. I have been blessed to know Barbara for over three decades as a friend of Mark’s. She was always wonderful to us teens: caring, happy, and always engaging us with questions. It was always great to hear her classroom stories. One of many terrific memories involved Barbara, my mom, and a few others joining us for a couple of days at Boy Scout camp in Clare, Michigan. They enjoyed each other's company and were proud moms. You are in my thoughts and prayers.



Joris Soeding - September 18, 2025 at 10:13 PM

LD

“ Love, Barb, Kevn, Lindsay, Julie & Diana planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Barbara D. Heilala.

Love, Barb, Kevn, Lindsay, Julie & Diana - September 18, 2025 at 06:38 PM

LD

“ Love, Barb, Kevn, Lindsay, Julie & Diana purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of Barbara D. Heilala.



Love, Barb, Kevn, Lindsay, Julie & Diana - September 18, 2025 at 06:38 PM

CB

“ Carl and Martha Butcher purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Barbara D. Heilala.



Carl and Martha Butcher - September 18, 2025 at 03:18 PM

SK

“ Barb was one of the kindness people I have ever met. She was always willing to help anyone in need with her time, money and love. She and Bob will be missed by many friends. Sandie Knollenberg

Sandie Knollenberg - September 08, 2025 at 05:17 PM

KS

“ Barb’s library was a wonderland where stories leaped off the bookshelves, puppets sang and stuffed animals came to life! with every page she turned and read, she sparked curiosity, creativity and, lifelong love of reading and learning. Barb was a treasure trove of tales, a maestro of imagination and a guardian of childhood wonder ✨ I was honored to teach with her at DCDS Shine On Barb and Bob! ❤️ Krista Stern

Krista Stern - September 08, 2025 at 07:02 AM

SC

I loved knowing Barb and had the opportunity to work with her. Barb's contagious enthusiasm for finding the best children's literature for her library ensured that every teacher or child received quality books for whatever their needs or interests were. If you were researching a specific topic, Barb would make sure you had sufficient materials and resources to make your lessons relevant and interesting. Barb's library was the hub for fun centers, computer research, and books for all ages. Barb's kindness and enthusiastic support towards her students and faculty were just a few of the qualities of this remarkable woman.
Sharon Catalano

Sharon Catalano - September 09, 2025 at 07:19 AM

MS

It was my good fortune to start teaching at DCDS the same time as Barb. That bond we shared was a real gift. Barb was filled with true goodness. She enriched our ordinary days. She was a creative giver who inspired a love of reading, learning and caring to us all at DCDS. Her wonderful stimulating projects in the library went well beyond simple. Barb was a good friend to all. Her light still shines brightly in all of us. What a treasure we've lost and Heaven has gained!
~ Marilyn Siembor

Marilyn Siembor - September 09, 2025 at 08:31 PM

MJ

I met Barb when our children were young. We had a neighborhood babysitting coop between Wing Lake Shores and Foxcroft subdivisions in which we would trade hours of babysitting as we were stay-at-home moms at the time. She had attended Immaculata High School and the University of Detroit and I graduated from Marygrove College which was in the neighborhood. Years later after she retired from teaching in the Detroit public schools, I suggested she substitute at the school where I was teaching — Detroit Country Day Lower School. She did so and became our valued and beloved librarian in no time at all!

Mary Lou Jurkiewicz - September 10, 2025 at 06:36 PM

LH

Bob and I were friends from the time we were kids growing up in Republic until the day he died. He was more like a brother than a friend. We lived together one summer as students at Michigan Tech. We made a trip to Alaska together. He was even closer to my brother Curtis than he was to me. They spent many hunting seasons at Curt's camp. When we got to know Barbara, we knew she was the perfect wife for him. Sadly, the will both be missed.

Lester & Carolyn Hendrickson

Lester Hendrickson - September 12, 2025 at 04:36 PM

K(

Aunt Barb was a wonderful, energetic woman full of joy, grace, and all lot of energy. She was committed to family, faith, and her profession. She was truly a great inspiration for me.

Uncle Bob was a great husband to Aunt Barb and a great father.

I will miss both of them so much.

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and perpetual light shine upon them.

May they both rest in peace. Amen.

Keith Pascoe

Keith Pascoe (Nephew) - September 13, 2025 at 11:38 AM

SW

Creative, thoughtful, kind, loving, dedicated, inspirational, thorough, empathetic, great storyteller, organized and positive are some words that came quickly to mind when reflecting on Barb's years teaching at DCDS. How very fortunate we were to know her and call her colleague and friend.

She was quite remarkable and memorable. She will be greatly missed by many.

Rest in peace Barb with your beloved Bob

Sally Wiz - September 18, 2025 at 04:35 PM