

Eden Prairie Schools promotes literacy with mobile classroom service

The Eagle Express is a mobile classroom and community outreach bus removing barriers to education

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The Eagle Express Summer SPARK Program (Stories Promoting Adventure, Reading and Knowledge) received praise for its innovative hands-on learning programming during the March 23 Eden Prairie School Board meeting.

Founded in July 2023, the Eagle Express provides an innovative learning environment for students in the Eden Prairie community on a bright red school bus. It is inspired by the initiative to bridge and continue student involvement with literacy, specifically over the summer when minimal school interaction occurs.

"The Eagle Express came out of ESSER (Federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funding and it was an innovative way for us to create a mobile classroom and outreach bus to bring services out into

the community. The goals of the Eagle Express are to remove barriers to access to all of the amazing programming that Community Ed[ucation] has," said Olivia Antilla, outreach and engagement supervisor, Community Education.

More than 450 students attended program events hosted in neighborhoods throughout Eden Prairie last summer. Whether it be youth programming, screening, or Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), the bus is built to eliminate financial

or transportation barriers experienced by the district's students and families.

Last summer, the bus traveled to four different locations in the local area, offering literacy activities and experiences to students. These activities and experiences directly correlated with the stories being read in the program to help bring learning to life.

The Eagle Express traveled to Briarhill Apartments (Mondays), Edenvale Apartments (Tuesdays), the Preserve

Association (Wednesdays), and Burning Tree West Apartments (Thursdays), from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., servicing students in those neighborhoods.

"By using a variety of books and just really emphasizing the literacy aspect, we're able to connect that with our activities hands-on, whether they were games, arts and crafts, or anything else that we could connect with our stories into our daily programming," said Ben Lee, youth enrichment supervisor with Community Education.

With the hope of sparking a lifelong love of literacy, Antilla suggested having local authors visit and speak with students at the various program sites. She took it upon herself to connect with a diverse pool of authors, emphasizing the importance of this potential opportunity for student success.

"The most important part was having such a diverse lineup of authors. Whether it was based on race, or religion, or having a variety of genders as well,

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Obituaries

Marilynn McRae Weibel

Our bright light, spitfire of a mom, was born to Horace "Mac" and Celesta "Sally" McRae on June 24, 1945, in Minneapolis, MN. She and her brother David and sister Judy grew up in Deephaven, MN. She graduated from Minnetonka High School in 1963 and then ventured off to Mankato State University where she graduated in 1967. Upon returning from overseas travels after college, she started working at The Bank Wayzata and then Norwest as a personal banker in Deephaven for most of her 39-year career with the bank, retiring from Wells Fargo in 2013.

She passed away on March 13, 2026, after two weeks on Hospice Comfort Care, which was helping her manage after a severe fall in February.

She was married to Stewart Grant and had two daughters, April and Kim, divorced and then later married Martin L. Weibel Sr. in Aug. 1992.

She will be loved and missed by her surviving family and friends: daughters April (David) McIntosh and Kim (Bruce) Hanson; her sister Judy Stanchfield; sister-in-law Janet McRae; stepchildren Claudia (John) Penaz, Russ Weibel, Pam Stoner, Brad (Ruth) Weibel; nieces Linda (Mike) Schulenburg, Deanna Stanchfield, Donna Schoenrock; nephew Scott (Courtney) McRae; grandchildren Mackenzie Williams-Grant, Hannah McIntosh, Christie (Karl) Maanum, Brian Weibel, Amber Penaz, Keaton Penaz-Trelstad, Carrie Mitchell, Andrew Weibel, Jon Weibel, Dan Weibel; many great-grandchildren and GGG's; many great nieces and nephews and great-great nieces and nephews; and life-long friends, Susan Crozier, Angela Griffin, Honor McKnight, Leah Barnacle, Jason Schuck and Christopher Wasilensky to name a few.

Marilynn was predeceased by her parents, her brother David McRae, brother-in-law Rollie Stanchfield, her granddaughter Britnay Lee Grant, first husband Stewart Grant, two stepsons Martin (and Patricia) Weibel Jr. and Greg Weibel and of course the love of her life for 31 years, Marty (age 99 when he passed in Jan. 2024).

Marilynn's life remembrance will be held at Zion Lutheran Church, 241 5th Ave. N, Hopkins, MN 55343 on Saturday, April 11th at 10am for visitation, 11am service hosted by her pastor, Padre Howard Kreinke and small luncheon at noon. She will be interred at Chisago Memorial Park in Chisago City, MN.

In lieu of flowers, please donate in her name to the CF foundation or Operation Smile.



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