



## Lyra Margaret Destefano

March 20, 1938 - September 24, 2020

### Obituary for Lyra Margaret DeStefano

Margaret DeStefano, retired art teacher, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, 82, died Thursday, September 24, 2020, from complications with dementia at the Joplin Health and Rehabilitation Center, Joplin, Missouri.

Lyra Margaret DeStefano was born March 20, 1938, in Carthage, MO. She was the youngest daughter of J.C. and Mary Bussinger who were both teachers. She graduated from Carthage High School, attended Joplin Junior College, MO State University, and ultimately received a Master's degree in Art from Pittsburg State University.

She taught art in the public schools of Miami High School, Oklahoma, and Joplin RVII Schools for 30 or more years. After retirement, she substituted in many schools and taught half-time for Neosho Schools for several years. She loved teaching and her students, many of whom have remembered her years after graduation. Wal-Mart was always a fun place to visit because so many former students would stop her to talk and reminisce about school years.

Margaret was a life-long member of the First Baptist Church in Carthage, Missouri, where she sang in the choir nearly her entire life there. Along with her sister, Gay Straw, and their daughters, Bonnie Hudson and Jamie Richey, they belonged to two equestrian clubs, the Joplin Misses of Joplin and the

Shooting Stars of the Carthage area. She was also a life-long participant in the Maple Leaf parade, beginning with with sister Gay and a little donkey called Pete who drew a wagon and subsequently though years with riding clubs and then with her beautiful bay Saddlebred gelding, Genius.

In 1957, Margaret married Robert Johnson, deceased 1994. They have two children, Jamie and John. Jamie Richey, an English teacher at Jasper High School, lives outside of town by Carthage, MO. She helped raise a foster daughter, Kori Titius, who has a daughter, Kendall, with her husband Jordan. John Johnson, a car salesman in Jopin, lives in Joplin, MO, with his daughter Cecily Phillippii and her husband Justin, and children Hunter and Alayna. John's daughter, Grace Gorda of Joplin, MO, recently married her husband Shawn. They have one daughter, Lily Gorda. Margaret's second husband was Bill DeStefano, a businessman, deceased 2011. They enjoyed restoring old cars, going to car shows, and caring for their horses and dogs. Margaret's truest friend and companion throughout life was her sister, Gay Straw. They taught art together, rode horses together, and shared all things.

Margaret was a talented, giving woman who loved life, her dogs, horses, and her family. She was in the habit of picking up strays be they human or animal and giving them homes and love. She has passed on that character trait to her children, and anyone who knew her knew she loved them.

Margaret was a wonderful mother, friend, and teacher. She never had too much to do to miss having fun. She laughed and sang through life's ups and downs, but because of her generosity and kindness, they were mostly ups. She had no equal. She will be sorely missed.

Memorial services will be held at 2:00 p.m. Monday, September 28, 2020 at Ulmer Funeral Home. Arrangements are under the direction of Ulmer Funeral Home.



# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

SEP **28.** 2:00 AM (CT)

Ulmer Funeral Home  
1208 S. Garrison  
Carthage, MO 64836  
(417) 358-2222  
ulmerfh@gmail.com  
<https://www.ulmerfh.com/>