

# Lucille Mae Saunders

1930 - 2024



**BORN**

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**DIED**

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# Lucille Saunders Obituary

Lucille Mae Saunders

September 30, 1930 - November 29, 2024

Lucille Mae Saunders of Omaha, Nebraska died peacefully November 29th, 2024 at her residence following complications of a fall. Lucille was born September 30th, 1930 as the second of five children born to Frances M. Sapienza Saunders and Merwyn B. Saunders of Sioux City, Iowa. She is survived by her siblings Pauline Saunders Guillaume of Cascade, Iowa and John Saunders of Oak Park Heights, Minnesota.

Frances raised her children in the Roman Catholic religion and Lucille attended the local Cathedral Catholic High School with her siblings. She pursued her collegiate training at the Catholic Clarke College of Dubuque, Iowa and graduated with a degree in Education. Her religious beliefs led her to the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM) motherhouse in Dubuque and following graduation from Clarke she took her first vows with the sisterhood in 1949, pursuing service to her God and her community.

Lucille's career as a teacher took her initially to St Thomas the Apostle, a BVM school in West Hempstead, New York. For the next 20 years she taught in Illinois, California, New York, Nebraska, Washington state and later Hawaii - where she developed a particular interest in early childhood education and became a beloved teacher of the local Hawaiian children.

In the 1970's, with the Second Vatican Council leading widespread reformation within the Roman Catholic Church, Lucille was stationed in Butte, Montana at Saint Joseph's Parish where she continued to pursue her

love of teaching and community outreach. The motherhouse transferred her to Cardinal Spellman school in Omaha, Nebraska in 1971. Perhaps echoing in her own thoughts the unrest within the Church as a whole, she left the Sisters of the BVM in 1972.

In Omaha, Nebraska Lucille found community and shared belief at Holy Family parish in downtown Omaha. She continued with her community activism and founded her own early childhood education center when she opened the doors of the Open Elementary School. This early learning center and preschool flourished and enhanced Lucille's reputation as a socially conscious entrepreneur and educator. Due to increasing pressures of work, Lucille sold Open Elementary in the 1980s. She continued to teach, first at the Jewish Day School and then within the Omaha Public School (OPS) system. Her final years with OPS were as librarian and reading instructor at Minne Lusa elementary.

In all her time in Omaha Lucille maintained a wonderful rapport with the youngsters she taught and used the art of storytelling to communicate, involve the children actively, and deliver her lessons joyfully. Lucille became a member of the Omaha Organization of Public Story-telling (OOPS) and took formal training to maintain certification of her skills. Some of her early experiences replaced homilies at Holy Family with stories addressed to the children. As her reputation developed, she made guest appearances as storyteller at Omaha schools, outdoor educational events and holidays.

As a final gift to the community, Lucille donated her body to the Nebraska Anatomical Board for medical education and research purposes. Her friends and family want to explain that there will be no funeral service at this time, but at a later date a celebration of life will be held. Following Lucille's wishes, her friends and family are organizing a memorial scholarship fund in her

honor through the Omaha Education Association Foundation. Those interested in donating to the scholarship fund should contact the OEA Foundation; 4202 South 57th Street; Omaha 68117; Attention: Saunders Scholarship. Mark the donation in memory of Lucille Saunders.