



## Susan "Susie" Backlund

November 14, 1951 - September 17, 2020

Susan "Susie" Backlund, 68, of Kingsford passed away peacefully on Thursday, September 17, at Evergreen Assisted Living Center. Her passing marked the end of a 15-year struggle with Early Onset Alzheimer's Disease.

Susie was born in Iron Mountain on November 14, 1951, the daughter of Robert and Shirley (Johnson) Menghini. She graduated from Kingsford High School in 1969 and attended Central Michigan University and Northern Michigan University, earning a Master's Degree. She married Wayne Backlund on December 28, 1974 at the St. Mary Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Kingsford. She gave birth to her only child, Robert, on April 22, 1982. Susie was an elementary educator for over three decades, devoting her energy and expertise to the most vulnerable students. She spent the majority of her career in the Homer (Michigan) Community Schools, retiring in June of 2006. A former student summed up Susie's professional, personal and pedagogical prowess the best:

"Mrs. Backlund has helped me with my disability and I know I wouldn't be who I am today without her assistance. She was my most influential teacher and my goal is to become a social worker where I can help kids the same way that Mrs. Backlund helped me... because if it wasn't for her I would have failed at a lot of things."

Susie lived life with passion, zest and a personality that was infectious. She loved her family and had an uncanny ability to humbly boast about them. She loved to shop and was known to travel far and wide in search of sales and antique treasures. Her laugh was contagious. She was creative and had a knack for seasonal decorating that could make Martha Stewart jealous. She was stubborn and one knew where she stood on an issue. She loved to ski. Susie was a paragon for living life with gratitude, often reminding her family of how "lucky" they were. Manners mattered. "Please" and "thank you" were foundational to her vocabulary. Family consensus was that she might have been wrong once; however, this will need to be confirmed or debated with her at a later date. Even in the face of a terminal illness she demonstrated the utmost courage to live, love, laugh and navigate the unknown darkness with kindness and light.

Susie is survived by her husband, Wayne; a son, Robert Backlund and daughter-in-law, Meredith Niles, both of Lincoln, VT; two sisters, Joan (Larry) Swartout of Iron Mountain, MI and Kris Deckett of Tawas City, MI; a granddaughter, Suvi Backlund-Niles; a brother-in-law Jim (Mary) Backlund; and six nephews, Tom Swartout, Andrew Swartout, Alex Swartout, David Deckett, Zach Backlund, and Max Backlund.

Along with her parents, Susie was preceded in death by her in-laws, Adolph "Pusty" and Rena Backlund.

A private memorial service will be held later this week. A public celebration of Susie's life will take place in the summer of 2021, assuming that it can be done safely in light of Covid-19.

The Backlunds want to extend their deepest gratitude to family, friends and community members who helped them navigate the challenges of Alzheimer's Disease. No gesture of support, help and kindness went unnoticed over the years. We especially want to extend our appreciation to our heroes and Susie's "angels" at Evergreen Assisted Living Center for taking care of any and all of her needs day in and out over the last few years. Your tireless efforts helped provide solace for a family trying to manage complicated loss and grief.

In lieu of flowers, Susie's family requests that you consider carrying out the following actions with her spirit and passion for life in mind:

Being kinder than necessary to ALL – even if your political views differ (imagine that)

A phone call to a family member or friend

Voting for elected leaders who support public schools, teachers and equitable education for all students, especially those with special needs

Reaching out to a family that is facing Alzheimer's Disease or another neuro-degenerative disorder and asking not "if" they need help, but "how" you can help.

A donation to the Greater Michigan Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association (<http://www.alz.org/gmc>) in Susie's honor

Stories and memories of Susan "Susie" Backlund may be expressed online at <http://www.ernashfuneralhomes.com>

The family has entrusted the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home with the arrangements.



# Comments

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“ I have fond memories of Susan’s infectious smile and laughter. She was so full of life and a great teacher at Homer Middle School. My daughters Emily and Amy are both dedicated teachers. I think Susan’s example was influential in their career choices.

As a parent and school board member at Homer, I appreciated Susan and her wonderful way with students.

I am so sorry for your loss and for the heartbreaking Alzheimer disease, which robbed her of so many good years.

Sincerely,  
Mary Althaver

**Mary Althaver** - October 23, 2020 at 09:17 PM

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“ Wayne,  
So sorry to learn of Susan's illness and death. I had no idea she was ill. I would like to catch up when things slow down for you. I now live in San Miguel de Allende, MX. My email is mark@putnammail.com. Please know you and Mitchel are in my thoughts and prayers.

Mark Putnam

**Mark Putnam** - September 28, 2020 at 10:12 PM



“ So very sorry for your loss. I remember her always smiling and being happy. Keeping you and your family in my prayers.

Rosanna Blodgett

**Rosanna Blodgett** - October 04, 2020 at 03:56 PM

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“ Dear Wayne, Rob, Meredith and little Suvi,  
You guys are certainly in our thoughts right now. I pass your old house almost every day on my walk and think of all the laughing we did with Susie planning Shearman School PTO meetings around your kitchen table. Susie always put you in a good mood with her infectious laugh! Take care you all and know that Susie is truly resting peacefully.

Jim and Claire Hammer

**Jim and Claire Hammer** - September 26, 2020 at 07:49 AM



“ Hi Wayne, I am so sorry to hear about Susie. I will always remember her warm smile and beautiful twinkling eyes. My happy memories from growing up include your mom, your dad, you, and Susie. Take care you are in my thoughts. Karen Bolander

**Karen Bolander** - September 25, 2020 at 11:40 AM

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“ Wayne and Rob,  
So sorry to learn of Susie's passing. She was a delightful lady who always made the day for so many people. I am sending you thoughts, prayers, love and hugs. May God hold you in the palm of His hand and give you peace and rest. I taught business in Homer during the 60's and always appreciated what you and Susie did, Wayne. You may not remember me, but I was married to Bill DeVries at one time. Please know that many people are here to support you during this time, and remember the good times. Polly (DeVries) Wild

**Paulene Wild** - September 24, 2020 at 10:42 PM

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“ To Wayne and Rob:  
I am so sorry to hear of the passing of Susie.. What a wonderful person, she was. Always had a smile and that laugh was so contagious.. I had her as a 5th grade teacher at Homer Community Schools and then I became her friend and baby sitter for Rob. Her and I had some fun laughing times. When she was around, there was never a dull moment, always laughing about something..  
Have some great memories with you all..  
Love, Janet Lawrence Spaulding

**Janet Spaulding** - September 23, 2020 at 08:14 PM

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“ Lou and I enjoyed many wonderful years as neighbors and friends of Susie and Wayne. Lou and Susie used to sing the Iron Mountain fight song together. She had a unique infectious laugh and a wonderful smile. To Wayne and Rob and family we are so sorry for your loss. God Bless you all. Lou and Diane Giannunzio

**Lou and Diane Giannunzio** - September 23, 2020 at 02:50 PM

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“ Mr. Backlund and family...I was deeply saddened to read the loss of Mrs. Backlund. You, Wayne being my favorite teacher, was how I meet your joyful wife. She was always smiling and so, so happy. My heart breaks for you and your family. My thoughts and prayers are with you all. Close your eyes and be still and you will feel Susie's love all around you. RIP, you made a difference in this world and will be missed by many!

Kimberly Evans Williams - September 23, 2020 at 12:23 PM

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“ Dear Wayne, Rob and family,  
I am saddened to learn of Susie's passing. You are in my thoughts and prayers. Susie packed an amazing amount of memories into her 68 years. She touched many lives for the better and gathered many friends along the way.  
I am sharing two fond memories of our time on the Flivver Flash. We worked together for two years producing that monthly newsletter. In the summer of 1968 Susie and I were given scholarships to attend a two week journalism seminar at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. There weren't too many opportunities for 16 and 17 year old girls to be on college campuses "in the day". It was an adventure, an experience of a lifetime! She smiled, even when we navigated Detroit Metro Airport alone for the flight home!  
The second is of the yearly Flivver Flash banquet in the Spring of her senior year 1969. The photo is of the head table; Larry Waisanen, editor-in-chief, Mrs. Ruth Carlson, advisor, Susie Menghini, senior editor and Bill Butsic, sports editor. Susie made everything we did together fun!  
Heaven is a little brighter because Susie is there!  
Jane Osterberg Steinke



Jane Steinke - September 23, 2020 at 10:41 AM

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“ Oh my sweet friend and colleague Susie! How you will be missed by all of your Homer friends! Your bright smile and “giggle” brightened our days! Your students became better students because of you! May you rest in peace! Margaret

Margaret Michael - September 22, 2020 at 10:18 PM

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“ Dear Wayne, Rob, Meredith and Suki,  
Pam and I are so sorry to hear of Susie's passing. What a bright light she was in everyone's life. Susie never wanted to talk about herself but was always so interested in how you were doing! We surely miss our dinners after our "growth opportunities" for The Fountain Clinic. Though we are sure that Susie has been cared for with compassionate hands, know that now she is certainly being held in the most caring hands of all in heaven! Rest in peace Susie and our thoughts are with you Wayne and family.  
John and Pam McCann

**John McCann** - September 22, 2020 at 04:32 PM

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“ Our dear, fun friend, Susie gave us so much joy!  
She was our Disney buddy and always had a smile!.  
Being in Florida was so good for her. Pools, parties, Disney, beaches!  
We are so very happy she came into our lives.  
Rest in Peace, Susie Q..  
We Loved You Well!  
Eileen and Bob Burnson  
Poinciana, Fl.

**Eileen Burnson** - September 22, 2020 at 04:18 PM

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“ Candy Adkins ( Newsome) lit a candle in memory of Susan "Susie" Backlund



**Candy Adkins ( Newsome)** - September 22, 2020 at 02:54 PM



“ I had her for a teacher and she was great...I am deeply saddened to her of her passing, my thoughts and prayers are with the family

**Candy Adkins ( Newsome)** - September 22, 2020 at 02:56 PM

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“ Wayne and Rob:

My condolences on Susie's passing. She was one of the first people I met when I started teaching in Homer. I still remember hearing her unmistakable yoooper accent coming from the classroom next to mine in Fletcher Elementary. Later I had the good fortune to co-teach fifth grade English with her for several years at Homer Middle School. It would be difficult to find someone who cared more about her students than Susie. She was the best. Thoughts and prayers to you and your family.

Donn Anderson

Donn Anderson - September 22, 2020 at 01:30 PM

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“ To the Backlund family you are all in my thoughts and prayers. You had a great wife and mother that was wonderful beyond measure. I am so glsd I had her as a teacher. I will always be grateful for what she taught me in life. May the lord show you peace and comfort at this difficult time. RIP Mrs Backlund. We all love you.

Candy K Carl - September 22, 2020 at 01:56 AM

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“ Wayne, Rob, Meredith and family, we are saddened by the loss of our dear Susie, but know that her suffering is over.

Susie was a bright, happy person who loved life. She cared for her family and cared deeply for them. Susie was a willing volunteer. When the newly formed Marshall Soccer Club needed help, she was right there. She sold concessions, raffles and clothing sales.

We had the privilege of enjoying trips with Susie and Wayne.

Susie, we will always remember you!

Our deepest sympathy to her family. Much love, Ron & Ann

Ron Quinn - September 21, 2020 at 10:38 PM

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“ I had Mrs. Backlund as a junior primary and a special education teacher. I loved her as a teacher. One of my favorite teachers. So sorry for ur loss. She will be missed dearly.

**Sarah Wanting-Robinson** - September 21, 2020 at 09:59 PM

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“ I was lucky enough have her as a special education teacher she was always funny and helpful she went out of her way for her students never gave up on anyone..I didn't think teachers meant anything..till I read her obituary and couldn't stop crying thinking of her..so very sorry for your loss of a great woman

**Jonathan Hickerson** - September 21, 2020 at 09:10 PM

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“ I was lucky to have Mrs. Backlund as a teacher, she is the reason I love to read. She showed us how to get inside a book and become one with it, enjoying the adventure from start to finish. Thank you for sharing her with us, she was one in a million. Her beautiful soul will forever be missed.

**Christel (Cole) Arnold** - September 21, 2020 at 08:34 PM

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“ I was lucky to be a student of Mrs. Backlund and then a student assistant for her when I was in High School. We kept in touch after I graduated but lost touch after a few years. She was an awesome teacher, beautiful inside and out. So sorry for the pain and grief of her family.

**April (Buckner) Webber** - September 21, 2020 at 08:04 PM

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“ We had the privilege to teach with Susie in the 5th grade end at Homer and be close friends with Wayne and Rob. She had a huge impact on her students and friends. Everyone enjoyed her smile and laugh and she thoroughly enjoyed people of all types. We will always miss her kindness and compassion. Wayne and Rob , you both will always will be remembered for your amazing dedication and love for Susie.

**Michael Murphy** - September 21, 2020 at 07:56 PM

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“ Terry and Mike Murphy

**Terry and Mike Murphy** - September 21, 2020 at 07:57 PM

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“ I worked with Susie for a few months. She was a wonderful person and truly cared for her students and wanted the best for them. She even brought breakfast in for her student in need....I am thankful for her service to those students in need. Prayers to her family.

**Tracy VanMeter** - September 21, 2020 at 07:44 PM

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“ Prayers to you Mr. Backlund and your family.  
Take care, former student Lori (Butler) Drumm

**Lori Drumm** - September 21, 2020 at 07:15 PM

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“ Mrs Backlund was one of my favorite teachers in school. Her smile and laugh were unforgettable and she was one of the good ones!! She cared for EVERY student....even the trouble makers like myself at that time in my youth. I couldn't imagine having to lose someone twice like the Backlund Family has...you have my sympathy and condolences! Rest easy Mrs Backlund!

**W. Ken Smith II** - September 21, 2020 at 06:42 PM

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“ Hi Wayne and family, We are saddened to hear of Susie's passing. We know it has been a long, hard struggle. Both Tony and I have had parents with dementia, but always a much later onset. You have our condolences and we hope to join you next summer for a memorial for Susie. Tony and Sandi Adams

**Sandra Adams** - September 21, 2020 at 05:37 PM



“ Thank you so much for reaching out to us Sandi and Tony. God bless, Wayne

See you in the summer of 2022

**Wayne Backlund** - September 24, 2020 at 02:39 PM

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“ Dear Wayne, Rob and family. Our condolences on the passing of Susie. You have been an amazing family the support you Men in Susies life were the best Angels, she could have asked for on earth. We friends of Susie loved her sense of humor and kind heart. We loved Susie, her gentile nature and giggle will be remember. She is now sharing both in heaven. We will donate to the Alzheimer Assoc in Susie honor . Bless you and all the extended family. Donna and Glenn

**Donna Korpi** - September 21, 2020 at 05:06 PM