



REMEMBERING
Renee Nadine Melenka

June 26, 1972 - March 25, 2024



Renee (Melenka) Sauer, beloved mother, daughter, sister, and dedicated Registered Nurse, passed away suddenly on March 25, 2024 due to a brain aneurysm. Renee leaves behind a legacy of compassion, advocacy, and unwavering love, especially for her children. Born on June 26, 1972, in Lethbridge, Alberta, Renee was raised in Lethbridge County attending Sunnyside and McNally Community Schools and later, St Joseph's Middle and Kate Andrews High School in Coaldale.

Renee was the cherished mother of Jessi Melenka (16) and Jake Melenka (10), both of Cranbrook, BC. As a mother, Renee sought to instill the values of empathy, kindness, and resilience. Her devotion to her children knew no bounds, and she took immense pride in their accomplishments including judo and 4-H (Jessi) and hockey and lacrosse (Jake) and their aspirations.

The daughter of Albert and Susan Sauer of Lethbridge, Renee was raised with a deep sense of community and a commitment to service. Alongside her brother, Greg Sauer, of Calgary, Renee learned the value of hard work from an early age mostly growing up near Sunnyside and later the McNally area on five acres of land. It was here that Renee rode and jumped their Honda three-wheeler, participated in 4-H (sheep) and gained a deep appreciation for animals. While not having the opportunity to have a horse of her own, she was able to share in this love much later living vicariously through Jessi in recent years. Although it was not always the case (think teen years) Renee loved rural life, including times at the family farms near Seven Persons (Debler) and Conquerville (Sauer) with grandparents Lilian and Tony Debler and Anna and Lois Sauer, numerous aunts, uncles and cousins. Renee also loved summer camping trips and journeys that defined the early years to places including Lake Newell, Elkwater, Blairmore, Waterton and West Glacier (Montana).

Professionally, Renee spent two years at Lethbridge College before joining Green Acres Animal Clinic. It was here that Renee fostered her love of animals and began her long legacy of rescuing as many animals as she possibly could. Following this, Renee moved to Calgary where she trained as a Licensed Practical Nurse. This career took her to Jasper, where she had the honour of providing care for an individual who suffered a spinal cord injury and was confined to a wheelchair as a quadriplegic to end of life. Renee's time in Jasper came to be remembered as among her happiest and Jasper her most beloved place. Renee later returned home to Lethbridge before moving to Cranbrook and Fernie where she worked in hospitals in both BC (Cranbrook and Fernie) and Alberta (Crowsnest Pass). Renee returned to BCIT where, with great pride, she fulfilled a goal of becoming a Registered Nurse. Her caring nature was legendary and exceptional skills were evident in the interactions with patients and colleagues alike. Whether providing comfort to those in pain or advocating for the most vulnerable, Renee approached her work with unwavering dedication and a profound sense of duty.

Beyond her professional endeavors, Renee was a passionate advocate for animals and those less fortunate - and stories abound. Her compassion seemed limitless and was both a blessing and a curse for this highly empathic human. For most, it is no secret that Renee struggled with her mental health through much of her adult life. While stigmatized, especially in the early days, Renee learned to embrace this disease and did not shy away from her challenges publicly.

In addition to her loving family and friends, Renee leaves behind a community deeply grateful for her presence and inspired by her legacy of kindness and generosity. While she may no longer walk among us, her spirit will forever live on in the hearts of those who were fortunate enough to know her.

As a life-long giver, it is fitting that Renee was able to provide the gift of life, even in death. As a result of Renee's donation of organs, four individuals will receive the gift of life. While we grieve her loss, Renee's family is buoyed knowing that Renee's heart continues to beat in a donor recipient. Renee's family encourages anyone who has considered but not done so to register as a donor.

In addition to being predeceased by all of her grandparents, several aunts, uncles and cousins, Renee was predeceased by her best friend, Carol Braat, whom Renee held near and dear to the very end.

A celebration of Renee's life will be held at a later date and at a location to be determined.

In lieu of flowers or monetary donations, the family asks that you make an investment and donation in kindness, non-judgement and respect for humans (especially those less fortunate) and non-human species alike. Renee sought a better world defined by kindness. An act of kindness (random or otherwise) with Renee in mind would mean the world to us.

Renee will be dearly missed but never forgotten, her memory serving as a beacon of light and love for all who were touched by her remarkable presence. May she rest in peace, knowing that her life was a testament to the power of compassion.

