



Lorene McCormick Burkhart

July 11, 1934 - February 13, 2026

Our community has lost a visionary leader. Lorene Burkhart has passed away peacefully and of natural causes, leaving behind a legacy of dedication to service, philanthropy, leadership, and education.

Lorene was born on a farm near Vincennes, Indiana, on July 11, 1934. She was the only daughter of Emma Bobe and Clarence J. McCormick, welcomed by two older brothers, C. James and Donald R. McCormick. She was followed into the family by her younger brother, Edward. In addition to farming, her father served as U.S. Under Secretary of Agriculture in the Truman administration from 1950 to 1953 as well as Trustee for Good Samaritan Hospital and Vincennes University, providing both inspiration and example for Lorene's future endeavors. Her mother was a strong Christian woman, who oversaw the operations of the farm while her father was away, was deeply involved in their church, and well known and regarded throughout the community.

As a typical farm girl, Lorene joined her local 4-H Club at the age of nine and remained a member for nine years, earning many awards for her leadership, baking, and sewing skills. She graduated from Decker High School as Valedictorian of her class of 12 students in 1952.

Lorene then enrolled at Purdue University where she majored in Home Economics Education. While at Purdue, she received many honors and was a member of Mortar Board and Kappa Alpha Theta sorority. During her time there, she met and married George Shunk, the father of her two sons, Mark

and Stewart. Upon graduation from Purdue and short stays in Lafayette, IN and Vincennes, Lorene, George and baby Mark moved to Cincinnati where Stewart was born, and Lorene began her professional career.

Lorene's first job was teaching high school Home Economics in Cincinnati as well as training women on welfare in employment skills for the Cincinnati Board of Education. Upon moving to Indianapolis in 1964, she shifted her focus to applying her home economics background to a wide range of opportunities in public relations, broadcasting, marketing, and as a corporate executive with Jenn-Air (Indianapolis) and Borden (Columbus, OH and Houston, TX.) She founded "Women's Investment Network" in 1983 and served as a publisher for the Indianapolis Register. At age 70, she began writing books, authoring seven titles including "An Accidental Pioneer, a Farm Girl's Drive to the Finish" and "Home on the Farm, if Chickens Could Talk" and the children's book "Raccoon Tales."

After being single for ten years, Lorene married prominent Indianapolis businessman John Burkhart in 1985 and retired from "work for pay" to pursue "work for no pay" (as she called it,) becoming a dedicated community volunteer. She used the skills and leadership talents developed in her business career to help nonprofits, serving on over 25 boards throughout her life. She was a founding board member of Meals on Wheels of Marion County, the Women's Fund of Central Indiana, the Arts Council of Indianapolis, and the Center for Families at Purdue. She also served on the Board of the Indiana 4-H Club Foundation, the national board of Girls, Inc., and was president of the Indiana Home Economics Association.

Lorene's passion for education included serving as a Trustee of the University of Indianapolis for 14 years, where she received an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities. She also served on the Foundation Board of Ivy Tech Community College, where she received an Honorary associate degree, and on the Board of Visitors of Marian University.

For her many lifelong contributions to Purdue University, including her gift to establish the Center for Families and serving as President of the President's

Council, Lorene received numerous awards: Consumer and Family Sciences Gold Achievement Award, Purdue Alumni Association Citizenship Award, Distinguished Service Award, Ambassador of the Year, and Honorary Doctor of Letters.

Her reputation and success as a fundraiser and organizer led to recognition and many awards from the community, including the Sagamore of the Wabash from two governors, Indiana Academy from the Association of Independent Colleges, Kappa Alpha Theta Spirit of Philanthropy, and Twin Stars Awards.

Lorene was a lifelong Methodist, baptized at Trinity Methodist church in Vincennes. She was a dedicated member of St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Indianapolis for a time frame spanning nearly 60 years. Her abiding yet quiet faith was at the core of her lifelong passion for serving others.

Lorene is preceded in death by her parents, husbands, and brothers Jim and Don. She is survived by her brother Ed (Lana), sons Mark (Suzy) and Stewart (Teresa), grandchildren Trevor Shunk, Zach Shunk, Kelsey Smith (Trevor), Caroline Shunk and Jaclyn Shunk, and great-grandchildren Finnegan Smith, Beckham Smith and Hugh Moss.

Lorene's legacy is one that will live on through the positive impact she had, both directly and indirectly, on the lives of countless individuals and organizations. She made a difference wherever she went and will be deeply missed by all who loved and were inspired by her.

Services for Lorene will be held on Friday, March 6, 2026, at St. Luke's United Methodist Church, 100 W. 86th St., Indianapolis, IN 46260. Calling hours: 12:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M. followed by a memorial service at 3:00 P.M. There will be a private family burial in Vincennes.

Donations: In lieu of flowers, please send donations to the Center for Families, Purdue University, The Women's Fund of Central Indiana, and the Indiana 4H Foundation.

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 6. 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

St. Luke's United Methodist Church - North Indy Campus
100 W. 86th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46260

Held in the Fellowship Hall

Funeral Service

MAR 6. 3:00 PM (ET)

St. Luke's United Methodist Church - North Indy Campus
100 W. 86th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46260

Held in the Sanctuary

Tribute Wall

AK

“ I wrote of Lorene McCormick Burkhart's wonderful legacy at Purdue in my book *Purdue's Female Founders*—about her legendary gift in 1994 to what was then Consumer and Family Sciences to create Purdue's Center for Families. It was an historic moment for women and for the University. There was no other entity in the United States like Purdue's Center for Families.

The Center celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2024 and continues to be a concrete reminder that families, in all their diverse forms, are the foundation of society. As I state in the book, Burkhart encouraged other women to give. She said, “What I loved about meeting with women and getting them excited about being advocates was telling them how it feels when you realize ...that all we've learned to do our whole lives in our families—can now be a ... much ... bigger ... story.” Sending my deepest sympathies to Lorene's family and friends. —Angie Klink, writer@angieklink.com

Angie Klink - March 27 at 09:23 AM

MF

“ McCormick Family purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Lorene McCormick Burkhart.



McCormick Family - March 02 at 12:30 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Lorene McCormick Burkhart.*



February 27 at 04:45 PM



“ *Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of Lorene McCormick Burkhart.*



February 26 at 12:09 PM



“ *I only met Lorene once, but she and her sons have a had great impact on me and my career. I was interviewing one of her sons for a National Company and he said his mother would like to meet me and had a few questions. While this had never happened before I had no problem meeting with Lorene. She made a great impression on me and eventually both sons worked with me. This began a very successful and lifelong friendship with Mark and Stu as well. These friendships have endured for decades and continue today. A very intelligent, accomplished and generally wonderful woman.*

Robert West - February 20 at 11:50 AM

BB

“ Lorene was the grande dame of philanthropic goodness in Indianapolis. I appreciated the time, talent and treasure she offered abundantly to so many worthy nonprofit organizations. She walked the talk, as evidenced by Lorene founding *The Register*.

In recent years I've enjoyed staying in touch with Lorene through our membership in the Contemporary Club of Indianapolis, prior to her move to Kentucky. She will definitely be missed.

Brad Boyd - February 19 at 01:10 PM