



## Mary Elizabeth Murphy

April 8, 1940 - May 9, 2026

Mary Elizabeth Murphy, 86, passed away on May 9, 2026, following complications from a fall. A rare native Houstonian, Mary attended Holy Rosary Catholic School and St. Agnes Academy at its historic Fannin Street location. She possessed an innate zest for adventure; if she did not find it, adventure found her.

One of her greatest chapters began when she left Houston for Marquette University, where she met and married the love of her life, James "Jim" Patrick Murphy. Together they welcomed three children. In 1966, the family returned to Houston so Jim could attend night law school. Mary launched a trailblazing career in education with the Houston Independent School District (HISD). Wherever a glass ceiling existed, she worked tirelessly to shatter it.

While working and raising her three children, Mary earned a Master of Education from the University of St Thomas as a member of the inaugural graduating class. She later received a Doctor of Education in Supervision and Administration from the University of Houston, earning the prestigious E.E. and Myrtle B. Oberholtzer Award.

Mary advanced from the classroom to Assistant Superintendent of Schools, devoting her career to understanding how children learn and teaching educators how to teach. A widely published reformer, she earned numerous

accolades, including induction into Delta Kappa Gamma, Omicron Delta Kappa, and Phi Delta Kappa. She was at her best sharing wisdom with the next generation of educators.

Deeply devoted to her faith, Mary was an active member of the St. Anne Catholic Community, the Basilian Lay Associates, and to the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

To know Mary was to experience a life without dull moments and a table always open to others. She and Jim welcomed M.D. Anderson patients into their home, turning strangers into extended family. Exceptionally generous and remarkably quick-witted, these traits endured even during her cognitive decline.

She enjoyed tennis, the beach, travel, the Houston Pops Symphony Orchestra, and time with dear friends. A self-proclaimed “yo-yo queen,” she delighted others with her tricks. Her favorite role was "Mimi" to her nine grandchildren, whom she loved to spoil. She often said she never imagined how much joy grand-parenting would bring.

Mary was preceded in death by her parents, Beatrice and Joseph Anthony Heyl, Jr.; her brother, Joseph Anthony Heyl, III; and her husband, James Patrick Murphy.

She is survived by her daughters, Margaret A. Dwyer (John) and Kelly A. Fenton (Greg); her son, Patrick James Murphy (Sandy); and nine grandchildren: Megan, Patrick (Catherine Grace), Keegan, and Kelly Dwyer; William and James Fenton, Hope Latessa (Andrew); Maddie Loth (Matthew), and Maggie Murphy; as well as her cousin, Rev. Jack Hanna, CSB.

The family thanks the staff at the Village of Southampton, Brazos Towers at

Bayou Manor, and Three Oaks Hospice for their loving and compassionate care.

Services:

- Visitation & Rosary: Monday, May 18, 4:30–6:30 p.m. (Rosary at 6 p.m.) at St. Anne Catholic Community, 2140 Westheimer Rd., Houston, TX 77098.
- Funeral Mass: Tuesday, May 19, 10:00 a.m. at St. Anne Catholic Community.
- Graveside Service: Tuesday, May 19, 2:00 p.m. at Forest Park Lawndale Cemetery.

Memorials: In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Amazing Place (3735 Drexel Dr., Houston, TX 77027) or to the St. Anne Catholic Church Centennial Fund (2140 Westheimer Rd., Houston, TX 77098).

# Cemetery Details

**Forest Park Lawndale**

## Previous Events

### Visitation

MAY 18. 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

St. Anne Catholic Community  
2140 Westheimer Road  
Houston, TX 77098

### Holy Rosary

MAY 18. 6:00 PM - 6:30 PM (CT)

St. Anne Catholic Community  
2140 Westheimer Road  
Houston, TX 77098

### Mass of Christian Burial

MAY 19. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

St. Anne Catholic Community  
2140 Westheimer Road  
Houston, TX 77098

## Rite of Committal

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MAY 19. 2:00 PM - 2:30 PM.

Forest Park Lawndale

# Tribute Wall

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“ Mary Beth and I met at Marquette University 65 years ago and became the closest of friends. A friend who was kind, loyal, so smart and so much fun. She continued to give me the advice I always needed right up to her time in memory care. Before we graduated from college we met our husbands to be. They were also good friends! Mary Beth would remind me through the years we were much too independent for either of them. One of our many laughs we would share together. When you were with Mary Beth you were always laughing.  
We raised our babies and toddlers together and were inseparable until the Murphys left for Houston when Kelly was a baby. Then it was trips to Houston, Milwaukee or the Murphy lake home in northern Wisconsin.  
So many memories. One of my favorites was the week she spent in Milwaukee interviewing for the Superintendent of School position in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. Mary Beth chose to stay in Houston. Only a granddaughter's college graduation kept me from being there today. God bless you Peggy, Patrick and Kelly. You had the most wonderful of moms.  
Nancy Pfau

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Nancy Pfau - May 19 at 01:02 AM

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“ I worked with Ms. Murphy at HISD and she was a wonderful person to work with. My condolences to the family 🙏 Sharon (Robinson) Shepard

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Sharon Shepard - May 17 at 05:49 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Mary Elizabeth Murphy.*



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May 15 at 01:58 AM

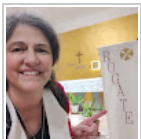


“ *Dear Family of Dr. Mary Murphy, I was very saddened to hear of the homegoing of my wonderful former colleague at Houston ISD's Central Office. We shared many wonderful times together. Dr. Murphy was indeed an outstanding, generous, and extremely professional administrator. I always admired her tenacity and strengths in working successfully with staff. She will be missed!*

*Linda Woods Wilson  
Retired Administrator  
Houston ISD*

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**Linda Wilson** - May 14 at 11:13 PM



“ *Dear family of Mary Beth,*

*I am so sorry for your sudden loss - I pray for your consolation and the Eternal Rest of Mary Beth's soul In the Hands of God.*

*I used to go to the weekly movie club with her, my mom, and Fr. Ralph - she was always a joy to be around.*

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**Julieanne Loth** - May 14 at 05:09 PM