



## Dr. Karen A. Fortner

February 10, 2022

Dr. Karen Ann Fortner, age 64, lost her battle with cancer February 10, 2022. She was born in 1957, in Chicago, Illinois, the beloved daughter of Carl L. and Esther M. (nee Kaetzel) Fortner.

Karen earned her bachelor's degree in Biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Cell and Molecular Biology-Immunobiology from the University of Vermont. She graduated from La Crosse Central High School.

Since 2006, Karen was an Assistant Professor at the University of Vermont College of Medicine and a Faculty Scientist in the Immunobiology Unit of the Department of Medicine in Burlington, Vermont. Her postdoctoral studies and subsequent research provided considerable insight into why dysregulation of the normal turnover of T cells could lead to inflammatory conditions such as lupus. These findings demonstrated how a similar process might impact the inflammatory state associated with obesity and the promotion of fatty liver disease. She mentored promising scientists throughout her career.

Survivors include her mother Esther (nee Kaetzel) Fortner of La Crosse, Wisconsin, her brothers Carl (Patti) Fortner of Vernon, Wisconsin, Philip Fortner of Anchorage, Alaska, James (Lynn) Fortner of Madison, Wisconsin,

David (June) Fortner of San Diego, California, her nieces Kristyn (Michael) Koprowski of Vernon, Wisconsin and Cindy Fortner of San Diego, California, and other relatives and friends. Proceeded in death by her father Carl L. Fortner.

Inurnment will be at Mormon Coulee Memorial Park in La Crosse, Wisconsin, where a private family service will be held. Special thanks to her medical team at Froedtert Hospital Cancer Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Angels Grace Hospice, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. In lieu of flowers, memorials to the American Cancer Society are appreciated. The Rozga Funeral Home, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is serving the family.

# Tribute Wall

CC

“ I worked with Karen for 18 years. First and foremost, she was an incredibly kind woman, always willing to help colleagues troubleshoot a pesky problem with their project. As for Karen, and her own scientific pursuits, I have never, and will never, see someone more committed to science. She, I am sure is missed by her family, and her passing is a lost to all her worked with her. God bless, Karen, save passage to the other side.  
Colette

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**Colette Charland** - February 17, 2022 at 04:50 PM

EB

“ Karen was very dedicated and worked incredibly hard. Often when I would do experiments after hours, she would be in her lab. In between time points, we would enjoying discussing solutions to scientific and world problems. She was a valued colleague and is much missed.  
Lis

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**Elisabeth Barfod** - February 16, 2022 at 08:05 PM

RH

“ Sincere sympathy from the Heilman (Kaetzel) cousins in Indiana.



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**Ray Heilman** - February 16, 2022 at 11:58 AM

CD

*Though the Fortner family moved away from the Arlington Heights area when we were still young we all had a neighborly attachment. So sorry to hear about Karen. May you have peace and live with good memories. Carol (Smith) Dalton*

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**Carol Smith Dalton** - April 17, 2022 at 08:59 PM

CR

*“ We are all saddened to learn of Karen’s passing. I have fond memories of family get togethers in Indiana - and once in Wisconsin - and all the chaotic fun we had as the many cousins interacted. She will be missed. Sending you our best- Christine Pendergast Rose*

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**Christine Rose** - February 16, 2022 at 09:19 AM