



Sandra A. Gladding MD

July 29, 1955 - April 21, 2022

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Sandy Gladding was born July 29, 1955 and spent her early years on her family's farm in northwest Missouri. As a young girl, she dreamed of becoming a doctor - but put that dream on hold when she married soon after high school and had her two daughters, Jaime and Sabrina, who soon became the center of her life. Her passion for medicine stayed alive, and in 1984, as a single mother of two young girls, she re-enrolled in the six-year BA/MD program that she had been accepted to after high school.

As if raising two girls and attending school was not enough, Sandy was active in her church where she volunteered as a Sunday school teacher. It was at church that she met an aspiring pastor, Kim Gladding, who soon became the love of her life and husband of 35 years.

Sandy graduated from medical school in 1988 and was accepted to a general surgery residency in Grand Rapids, MI. She was the only female in her medical school graduating class to be accepted to a surgery residency and was the second woman to have gone through that residency program. Ever a trailblazer, she excelled as a resident and, in 1993, joined a private practice in Grand Rapids, MI. As a practicing surgeon, she led Blodgett Medical Center to obtain its trauma certification, received awards for her practical research on wound care, and established a reputation as a warm and caring physician who was a fierce advocate for her patients. Sandy knew everyone in the hospital by name - from food services to housekeeping to the CEO; each person knew she genuinely cared about them AND that she would hold them to the highest standards of care. Nurses responsible for the care of her patients said that while they trembled a little when Sandy would come to their floor - there was no other surgeon they would choose to care for them.

In 1998, Sandy and Kim moved to Phoenix, AZ when Sandy accepted a position with the Indian Health Service (IHS). She served for 7 years in the IHS before transitioning back into private practice and becoming Chief of Surgery at Banner Estrella

Medical

Center. Once again, Sandy became known for her unique ability to listen and provide

uncompromising care to her patients - in 2006 she was awarded the "Top Doc" award

and in 2017, Banner renamed that very award in her honor. The "Dr. Sandy Gladding

Associate's Choice Top Doc Award" will continue to be given annually to a doctor who

has been nominated by patients as deserving of this high honor.

Throughout her very demanding career, Sandy was an active partner to Kim in their

service to the United Methodist Church. She had a strong faith and found joy in helping

to run Sidewalk Sunday School, providing off-the-books medical care and advice to

countless folks in need and showing up to Sunday morning services even after a rough

night of call. She was also a loving and involved mother - somehow always making time

to pop down to the hospital cafeteria for a quick meal, call her daughters daily on her

commutes, visit them and get to know their friends, and ready to swoop in to support in

moments of need. One of Sandy's greatest joys was when Sabrina decided to follow in

her footsteps and became a surgeon. Sabrina was able to do learning rotations with

Sandy in both medical school and residency and the two would regularly talk shop - seeking advice and sparring on how to handle complex cases.

In late 2011, Sandy became ill and had to retire early from her surgery career. She spent the next 10 years battling chronic pain and auto-immune disorders. It was hard to transition from caregiver to patient and even in the worst of times, she was often able to surprise nurses and doctors with her deep medical knowledge.

During this time, Sandy became a proud “Nana” to two grandsons, Henry and Lucas, to whom she could never give enough hugs and snuggles. In 2020, after Kim retired they moved back to “The Cottage” on Center Lake in Tustin, Michigan. This had always been one of Sandy’s favorite places - a beautiful refuge from her full and sometimes stressful life. She passed away there on April 21 - with Kim, Jaime, Sabrina, and her mother-in-law, Irene Gladding, all at her side.

We will miss her fiercely but are comforted in knowing that her spirit and legacy live on in all the people that she inspired as a loving partner, dedicated mother, brilliant surgeon, relentless caregiver, compassionate friend and humble servant. May we all lead our lives with as much passion, integrity and love.

Services will be held at First United Methodist Church in Glendale, AZ on June 4 at 11:00 AM (10-11 AM visitation) and at St. Paul’s United Methodist Church in

Grand

Rapids, MI on June 18 at 11:00 AM (10-11 AM visitation). In lieu of flowers, please

consider donating to one of the following organizations in memory of Sandy:

Exalta Health - <https://exaltahealth.org/>

Operation Access - <https://www.operationaccess.org/>

COPE - <https://www.copeprogram.org/>.

Partners in School Innovation - <https://www.partnersinschools.org/>

An online guestbook is available at www.petersonfh.com.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN 4. 11:00 AM.

First United Methodist Church
Glendale, AZ

Celebration of Life

JUN 18. 11:00 AM.

St. Paul's United Methodist Church
Grand Rapids, MI

Tribute Wall

GA

“ Kim, Jaime and Sabrina my condolences for your loss of such an amazing women.

Dr Gladding demanded the best care for her patients and expected nothing less. She taught me to always be compassionate and fight for what is right.

She was a one of a kind and I'm honored to have known her. You will be greatly missed Sandy, Gods speed.

With sincere sadness, Gayle Campo

Gayle - May 16, 2022 at 11:42 PM