



# Tanya Lynn Rowe and Benton Bisbee Rowe

November 20, 2017

Tanya Rowe and her loving son Benton Rowe passed away in Bellingham, WA on Monday, November 20, 2017. Tanya was born March 29, 1974 in Toledo, OH. Benton was born February 20, 2012 in Bellingham, WA.

Tanya attended Gesu Grade School and graduated from Central Catholic High School in Toledo, OH, in 1992. She earned a B.S. at Eastern Michigan University and an M.A. at Western Washington University. She worked as a reporter for the Bellingham Herald, was a lecturer in the Journalism Department at WWU, and later worked for Bellingham Public Schools in Administration. Her most precious gift was her son Benton and she adored her brother Brad. Tanya loved the outdoors, running, mountain biking, hiking, yoga and writing. She enjoyed working with the teachers, staff and students of Bellingham Public Schools.

Benton was full of life and was a very smart boy with a wonderful vocabulary. He loved meeting people and making new friends everywhere he went. Much like his mom he enjoyed the outdoors, riding his bike, playing music and everything Star Wars. He cherished his time with grandparents Larry and Rita, uncle Brad, aunt Holly, their son Alden, and his neighborhood and Wade King school friends.

Tanya and Benton are survived by Tanya's parents, Larry and Rita Kerstiens, brother Brad (wife Holly) Kerstiens and their son Alden, uncle Mike (wife Nancy) Kerstiens and their son Mike, uncle Ron (wife Claudia) Rogers, great-aunt Lottie Czekaj, and many loving relatives and friends. You are invited to offer your condolences to the family at an informal, open house celebration of life to be held at Westford's Broadway Hall, 1300 Broadway on Wednesday, November 29th from 3-8 PM. Mass of Christian Burial will be held at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Bellingham on Thursday, November 30th at 11 AM. Reception following at the church. Memorials may be made to Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation at [ww5.komen.org](http://ww5.komen.org), Bellingham Public Schools Foundation, PO Box 1132, Bellingham, WA 98227-1132 or online at <http://www.bellinghamschoolsfoundation.org/together-we-can-make-a-difference> or Central Catholic High School 2550 Cherry St, Toledo, OH 43608 or online at <https://www.centralcatholic.org/gifts-and-giving/ways-give/>. You may share memories with the family at [www.westfordfuneralhome.com](http://www.westfordfuneralhome.com).



# Comments

---



“ Rita, Larry - We are shocked by your tragedy. We are thoughts with you and we pray for Tanya and Benton. We think about you during the Christmas holidays. Mietek and Jasia with family from Poland

**Anna Lutomska** - December 20, 2017 at 09:40 AM

---



“ Rita, Larry, Brad, and family - We cannot imagine the pain in your hearts following this bizarre event. Life has its unexpected twists, but no one would ever expect something so tragic. What a wonderful picture of Tanya and her son to hold in your hearts as a beautiful memory of such a beautiful young woman who was snatched away too soon, and a young boy who, I'm sure, gave his all during his all too short life. Our prayers are with your family for comfort and peace. Bob and Sue Savage

**Sue Savage** - December 01, 2017 at 11:01 AM



“ Rita, Larry and family: We know there is nothing Colleen and I can say that will ease the pain you are going thru. We will keep you in our thoughts and prayers and will remember the joy that Benton brought to Tanya and to our neighborhood as he pedaled ferociously up and down our neighborhood. God has a special place for your family.

Paul and Colleen Anderson

**Paul Anderson** - December 01, 2017 at 10:34 PM

---



“ Tanya was my first professor at WWU and showed me the value of journalism. I then worked with her for a summer at WWU; her kindness was her incredible power. As a natural introvert, I learned incredible lessons from Tanya.

I am heartbroken for her family and the community. She was truly a beautiful person, who positively impacted those who were blessed to have crossed her path.

**Shauna Bakkendatter Carlson** - December 01, 2017 at 01:11 AM

---



“ I admired so much about Tanya: her great gift for writing, the kind of mother she was, her thoroughness and professionalism, her keen intelligence, and the path she chose.

We are a greater community for Tanya's leadership and many contributions through the School District, at WWU, as a reporter, and most importantly as a mother and a

friend. We are a sadder place because her light is lost to us now. I am praying for all who loved Tanya and Benton, lifting them to receive God's great grace and strength and peace.

**Amy Cloud** - November 29, 2017 at 05:47 PM

---



“ I had the pleasure of working with Tanya on a number of joint projects for the Bellingham Schools - she was an unusual blend of competent professional and unfailingly kind. I was always struck by her clear desire to get to "win-win" for all involved, including students and families and staff. I will do my best to carry her spirit forward each day.

**Rodd Pemble** - November 29, 2017 at 12:20 PM

---



“ Tanya brought a special quality of spirit into the lives of those she touched, certainly in mine. And she brought that spirit into the life of her son. May her spirit live on in those who loved her and had the good fortune of knowing her for too short a time. In sorrow now and in joy of remembering. Jo Collinge

**Jo Collinge** - November 28, 2017 at 10:14 PM

---



“ I had the pleasure of knowing Tanya through our work with the Washington School Public Relations Association. Although I only saw her a few times each year, I always enjoyed talking with her and getting her insight on current school-related topics. Her work was exemplary and was often sought after to guide the work of other districts (mine included).

Tanya was kind, gracious and always willing to offer her advice and support. She helped me become a stronger leader and work harder each day.

I didn't have the opportunity to meet Benton, but his smile makes me happy. It's evident from the photos how much Tanya loved and adored him.

May they both rest in peace. I'm praying for their families, friends and everyone who had the joy of knowing them.

**Jayme Taylor** - November 28, 2017 at 12:37 PM

---



“ We send our love and condolences to you, Rita, Larry, and Brad. We cannot find words to express the deep sorrow we feel over the loss you have suffered. May you find peace knowing that God has welcomed Tanya and Benton into His loving arms and that one day you will be reunited with them. Our thoughts and prayers are with you. Ann and Jim Mizen.

**Ann and Jim Mizen** - November 27, 2017 at 06:57 PM

---



“ Rita, my grade school friend, our hearts are hurting for you and your family. This is beyond any type of understanding. There are not enough words. I remember Tanya's smiling face and burst of energy during her years at CCHS. The Hunt family will be keeping you and Larry and your family in our prayers!

**Tom and Betty Hunt** - November 27, 2017 at 06:11 PM

---



“ Tanya was a remarkable person and a role model for those of us who were her colleagues in school communications. Her work in Bellingham Public Schools was exemplary. She raised the bar for all of us.

I had the privilege of meeting Benton when she brought him with her to our Washington School PR Association conference in Leavenworth. What a sweet, bright boy!

Tanya and I were scheduled to meet tomorrow with our teams to share ideas and learn from each other. That is the kind of professional she was -- always learning, collaborating, and striving to be better.

I will deeply miss Tanya as a friend and a colleague. In her short life she made a great contribution to students, schools, colleagues and her community. I am grateful to have known her.

**Catherine Carbone Rogers** - November 27, 2017 at 05:57 PM

---



“ Rita and Larry,  
Paul and I always loved hearing about your trips to see your kids. You kept us entertained at CCHS games with some great stories of your times spent together. I know you will treasure those memories. There are no words to express our sadness for you at this time. Just know we will continue to keep you in our prayers and hope you will eventually find peace.



**Jan and Paul McNichol** - November 27, 2017 at 03:24 PM

---



“ I remember Tanya being a cheerleader for the high school football team. She was so energetic that we all got into the spirit of the game. Her cheerfulness and enthusiasm was a joy to watch. She's an angel now looking down on us all.

**Pat Reed** - November 27, 2017 at 02:25 PM

---



“ Rita,  
I read the Toledo Blade yesterday and I truly wish I could visit with you in person. I never met your daughter but feel like I know her from the beautiful tribute. Beautiful, intelligent, happy, wonderful mother, daughter, sister, niece, friend, coworker and more. You had such kind words to me after my sister June died recently that I hope I can do the same for you, Ron and your family. They are in your heart and memory forever and grandparents Glen and Stella are welcoming them with open arms. You are in my prayers at this most difficult time.  
Sue Kosolka, Rita and Ron's N. Toledo childhood friend

**Sue Kosolka** - November 27, 2017 at 11:06 AM

---



“ Rita,  
I taught with you about 20 years ago at St. Clement's School. I am overwhelmed with sadness at the loss of your daughter and grandson. Your family is in my thoughts and prayers.

**Lou Dunipace** - November 27, 2017 at 05:56 AM

---



“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



**Kathy Sheehan** - November 26, 2017 at 10:44 PM



“ Thank you, Kathy, for this photo that captures her so very well.

**Jo Collinge** - November 28, 2017 at 10:16 PM



“ My beautiful daughter!

**rita kerstiens** - December 06, 2017 at 11:18 PM

---



“ Kurt Gazow is following this tribute.

**Kurt Gazow** - November 26, 2017 at 07:52 PM

---



“ I enjoyed getting to know Tanya as a fellow faculty member during the year she taught in Western’s Journalism Department, but even more, I enjoyed the time we spent together in a creative-writing group. For nearly five years, four of us met every few weeks on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, and after having lunch and sharing recent news in our lives, we’d sit down to write.

This time was precious, as we all were doing nonfiction writing in our jobs, yet yearned for the fun and adventure of fiction and a chance to be more creative. Tanya had recently finished her MFA degree at Western, and she began working on a novel that involved mystery, adventure, and a heroine in the PR business.

Our writing sessions started with a prompt, a topic we’d all try to address in some fashion during the next hour. We’d fall into silence and write by hand in our notebooks, though I recall Tanya at some point began composing on her laptop. As we read each other our work and made suggestions, Tanya was unfailingly supportive and enthusiastic; she buoyed the rest of us along in our efforts.

How I wish I had a copy of Tanya’s story. But we left each session carrying away only our own day’s work. I recall her heroine, though: a brave and savvy woman hired to handle public relations for an association of pig farmers in a Midwestern state. We had a hilarious session of suggesting mottos that this PR person might use for these pork producers. And as Tanya read each new installment to us, we grew intrigued by the mystery of a character gone missing, and by hints of scandalous corruption in the

industry, which the heroine was investigating.

Sadly, we never got to hear the end of the story. Real life and its demands were impinging on everyone's time, and my notes for the group—which also included Kathy Sheehan and Anna Eblen—that began in April 2005 petered out by June 2010.

We had a brief reunion on a Sunday afternoon several years later, when Tanya wheeled five-month-old Benton in his stroller, for all of us to see. Though we admired him greatly, he slept through the gathering. Since then, my contacts with Tanya were fleeting, typically running into the two of them while shopping at the Food Co-op on Saturday mornings. But each time, her friendliness and enthusiasm felt like a bookmark for the future, a time when we again might get together and continue our stories.

I offer my deepest condolences to all of the family for this enormous loss of two most wonderful people.

Sincerely,  
Carolyn Dale

**Carolyn Dale** - November 26, 2017 at 06:56 PM

---



“ May God comfort you during this difficult time. You are all in our thoughts and prayers. Tom and Sharie (Makulinski) Wisniewski, Holland Ohio

**Sharie Wisniewski** - November 26, 2017 at 10:42 AM

---



“ My memories of Tanya are from when she was a young girl living down the street from us. My memories Benton are from the picture books that you used to bring to Girls night out and share with us, with a huge smile on your face. May you find joy and comfort in the wonderful memories that you have of each of them.



**Mari Lee Ryan** - November 25, 2017 at 10:09 AM

---



“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2) Tanya and Benton have gone home to take their place with our Lord Jesus. Rest in the peace of Christ, dear souls.

John Getchell - November 24, 2017 at 11:04 PM

---



“Tanya and I went to high school together and were then roommates at Eastern Michigan University for many years. I am so grateful to have called her my friend. We shared so many experiences - most of them fun, some difficult. Tanya was always full of life and always adventurous! Dancing at Theo’s, spring break in Cancun, parties in our apartment, just hanging out....I will cherish our memories forever. I never got to meet Benton, but knowing Tanya- I’m sure she was a fabulous mother. RIP Tanya...you had a very positive impact on my life and for that I am eternally grateful!

Julie Kolly - November 24, 2017 at 10:13 PM

---



“When we saw Benton move in the neighborhood we were ecstatic to have a friend for our children. His bright smile and sweet nature was infectious! My son, Koda looks at the house every day and looks for Benton. Lucy enjoyed playing the summer afternoons, day camps and activities with Benton—he was her true friend. I’ll miss Tanya and enjoyed our mom talks while we watched the children bike around our neighborhood and get into children mischief (in the best of ways) :) She had a warm and sincere heart and no words can express my gratitude for at least knowing her the little time we shared together. I will forever remember her and Benton. I pray to God for the comfort of Larry & Rita during this time. I just want to give them a hug and pray for Healing.  
Sincerely,  
Dakotah, Jessica, Lucy and Koda



Jessie Lane - November 24, 2017 at 04:25 PM

---



“Rita and Larry  
Colleen and I were very happy to find out that a young family was moving into our new neighborhood. Tanya always waved with that big smile when we drove or walked past. We are deeply sorry and feel very sad. Nothing can be said that will

ease your sorrow. The neighborhood lost two bright lights.

Paul, Colleen, and Mackenzie Anderson

**Paul Anderson** - November 24, 2017 at 01:22 PM

---



“ Tanya was not only the coolest babysitter my sister and I ever had but she was a big sister. Larry, Rita, Brad no words can truly express how sorry me and my family are for your loss.

**Bob Manders** - November 24, 2017 at 10:40 AM

---



“ Tanya, we just spoke last week at the Central Office for about 15- minutes; we were both headed in different directions, but I'm so happy that we made time to talk. I have always appreciated your smile, toughness, and positivity. As we talked, I consciously thought how great you looked, very healthy - I should have said it out loud, I'm sorry I didn't. Thank you for making that day brighter, I truly appreciated everything you told me on that day; it will inspire me always. Love and prayers from the Johnson Family

**Kevin Johnson** - November 23, 2017 at 02:05 PM

---



“ Larry and Rita. You know how I felt about Tanya and Benton. I shared in your joy of watching him dance and play his instruments on Thursday nights at Elizabeth Park. I thank God for knowing both of them. I have wanted to come and hug you. Just hug. No words. I believe that they are standing before Jesus and my granddaughter, Chelsey, greeted them at the door. We will blink our eyes and they will be greeting us at that very door. Their names will not be forgotten in Bellingham. Everyone loved them.

**Pam Fralick** - November 23, 2017 at 12:48 PM

---



“ You often hear people say, oh we grew up together, well we truly grew up together, 4 blocks apart in a neighborhood full of boys! I have soooo many memories, in looking back it seems like we were always together. I can picture the house she grew up in and her bedroom just as clearly as I can picture my own. Some of the things that first pop in my head are gymnastics and Chinese jump rope in my basement, 5:00 dinners at her house, the begging we would do to get my dad to take us to Friendly's for ginormous Reese's Pieces Sundaes, going to Tennessee with her family (and chickening out temporarily the night before), riding each other halfway home on our bikes at the end of the day together, playing Barbies on the airing deck at my house and in the basement at her house, our first fiasco with makeup and my mom making

us go wash our faces the minute we walked up the driveway, our pyramid mishap (sorry Brad), our green food coloring "mishap" in our kitchen, making a pact and swearing to never tell anyone what we did on the deck at Portside (don't remember what we did, just the pact but I'm sure it was something like dropping a gum wrapper or m&m or something) and Tanya's pledge to hunt me down using random guys from our past if we ever lost touch. Though time, distance and life no longer allowed us to see each other often, we were lucky to have technology to keep in touch now and then and I'm grateful we never lost touch. I wish I would have reached out every time I thought of her or was reminded of one of our shenanigans but I do think she knows of my love and admiration of who she was at her core as a child and who she grew to be as a woman. Rest In Peace my friend, you will be deeply missed.

**Beth Ralph** - November 23, 2017 at 11:17 AM

---



“ Maureen Finnen lit a candle in memory of Tanya Lynn Rowe and Benton Bisbee Rowe



**Maureen Finnen** - November 23, 2017 at 08:45 AM

---



“ Sending our love to you. I used to love sitting and talking with Tanya poolside at Bayside Swimming. She was a truly awe-inspiring person and mother. Benton was such a good friend to Claire and others at both GymStar and Coop Preschool. I will remember his sheer joy at the Lighted Christmas parade we attended with them one year and so many other events. We will miss them dearly.



**Christina Thomsom** - November 23, 2017 at 03:37 AM