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Former Golden City Councilor and State Rep. Gwyn Green dies

A fighting spirit that will remain a Golden legacy



Gwyn Green drops off her ballot during The March to the Ballot Box event on Oct. 17, 2015. The event was put on by a nonpartisan volunteer-run organization called Golden Votes with a purpose to promote voting in local elections.

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Social justice was her thing. She fought for rights for seniors, children, the poor, the unfairly imprisoned, the disabled.

Gwyn Green “had an unwavering sense of what was right, and stood up for it,” said Judy Denison who met Green at a Golden City Council meeting in May 2001. Both were active in the political and public affairs in Golden. “She was on the forefront of any action for the public good and the downtrodden. She remains an inspiration of courage and love.”

Green of Golden, 79, died on Sept. 12 following a five-year battle with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. She served as a Golden city councilor for three years in the early 2000s, which preceded the two-and-a-half terms she served in the Colorado House of Representatives.

“Gwyn always rose to the forefront and became a leader, known for her fighting spirit and outspoken attention to issues (that) few were willing to take on,” said Ray Goodhart who has known the Greens for about 25 years and met Green through activism efforts in Golden. “Whenever a righteous cause arose, Gwyn would be out in our neighborhood armed with her clipboard, infectious laugh and a strong viewpoint that one could not dismiss. (Her) spirit will be a part of Golden's legacy for generations to come.”

Green was born in New Orleans on Nov. 21, 1938, but was raised in Houston, Texas. She is survived by her two younger siblings, Wayne Druilhet of San Antonio and Melanie Morris of Houston.

Green attended Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, after high school and graduated in 1961 with a degree in journalism. She met her husband Dan while she was in college — he was attending the nearby University of Notre Dame. The two met at a college mixer event and they married in 1961 in Houston.

Dan and Gwyn Green raised four children — Kevin Green of Thornton, Laura Green of Georgia, Mark Green of Texas and Ben Green of New Mexico. All are in their 50s, within five years of age. Gwyn Green is survived by her four children, 10 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

“She loved everyone so much,” said Ben Green's daughter Rachael, 15. “Something I enjoyed are all the stories she told. She was so lively — it felt like you were reliving the past.”

Gwyn Green was an avid reader of both fact and fiction, was a good cook — she especially enjoyed Cajun and French foods, was a devout Catholic and loved spending time with her family.

But “what's really important,” Dan Green said jokingly, “is that she was a Notre Dame fan.”

Dan Green got a job as an electrical engineer with the Bureau of Reclamation, which brought the family to Colorado and they moved to Lakewood in 1965.

They were founding members of Christ on the Mountain Parish in Lakewood and were involved with St. Jude Catholic Church, also in Lakewood, where Gwyn Green worked as a secretary for a short period of time.

Daughter Laura Green's memories include laughing and enjoying each other's company, she said. The family hosted a weekly game night, they went on monthly camping trips to Rocky Mountain National Park during the summer and Gwyn and Dan Green would go on a date night every Friday.

"We had a really fun childhood growing up," Laura Green said.

In 1995, Dan and Gwyn Green moved to Golden.

She loved Golden, Dan Green said.

"As soon as she got here," he said, "she got involved with the people."

She was involved with the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), the League of Women Voters and Save the Mesas — a citizen-led protest group that formed following a 1997 proposal by Nike to relocate its world headquarters to South Table Mountain.

Sandy VanDeHey of Golden met Gwyn Green when Green joined the Jeffco League of Women Voters in 2004. The two got to know each other better when Green joined the league's sustainability committee in 2013 and they worked on issues such as pollution, water quality and natural resources together.

"I think the interest she always had with the underserved translated over to sustainability because those are the people most affected by these issues and are less likely to have a voice," VanDeHey said. "She had a very big heart and lived that life of giving."

After raising her family, Gwyn Green decided to pursue a masters degree and she earned her Masters of Social Work in 1984 from the University of Denver. She then became a clinical social worker, specializing in work with seniors and children.

"She did that until she ran for Golden City Council because she was upset with how the council was run" at the time, Dan Green said.

Gwyn Green served Golden's Ward Four from 2001-2004.

"As a former social worker, she was unfailingly about people and always tried to bring the human story into every decision we made," said Marcie Miller who served with Green on Golden's city council for three-and-a-half years. "As a (city) councilor, when you make the human impact your guide, you can't really go wrong, as Gwyn proved over and over. Everything she did was to improve the lives of her constituents and there's not one thing wrong with that."

In November 2004, Green, a Democrat, was elected to represent District 23, which encompasses parts of Lakewood and Golden. She held the seat from 2005-2009 when she resigned for health reasons.

Longtime political reporter, and current spokeswoman for the Colorado Secretary of State Lynn Bartels wrote [a remembrance of 'The Fightin' Granny'](#) on her blog:

One thing stands out about when Green's record is reviewed: her efforts to protect victims, including those damaged by the clergy. She and then Senate President Joan Fitz-Gerald in 2006 introduced a bill

that would have lifted the statute of limitations on civil lawsuits in cases of sexual abuse. They let the measure die on the last day of the session rather than let it be weakened by opponents, including the Catholic Church.

Known for her strong social graces, good sense of humor and intelligence, Green never lost an election, Dan Green said.

“She worked very hard,” he said. “She went door-to-door for every election, talking with people.”

Her time in office provided her with two nicknames — Landslide Green, given to her by former Speaker of the House Andrew Romanoff; and the Fighting Granny. The latter was supposed to be a negative campaign buzzword thought up by her opponent because of her age when running for her second term, Dan Green said, but ended up epitomizing the work that she did — a fierce advocate for seniors and children.

“People could see her heart, and that it was in the right place,” said Gwyn Green's son Mark. “She truly did the work she did out of the love from her heart.”