



Rae La Jean Waddell

December 30, 1967 - February 11, 2026

Rae La Jean Whitfield Waddell, 58, Tallahassee, Florida. After battling cancer for six years, she was released from her suffering and passed on to be with the Lord on February 11th, 2026, at First Commerce Center for Compassionate Care surrounded by family.

Rae was born and raised in Tallahassee. She spent her life dedicated to outdoor education starting Joe Budd, leading into education centers across the state with Florida Youth Conservation Center Network. She was awarded the 2019 Louise Ireland Humphrey Lifetime Achievement award for her work in youth education and conservation.

Throughout her life, she was an avid educator and ambassador that brought her passion into nature. She was an influential leader creating opportunities and careers in conservation guiding others to follow their dreams. In her free time, she loved to spend time with her family and travel, taking photographs along the way.

Predeceased by her father, Cary J. Whitfield. Survived by her husband, David Pate (Tallahassee), her children, Erin Waddell (North Carolina) and Amy Waddell (North Carolina), and her mother, Thelma Whitfield (Tallahassee).

A celebration of Rae's life will be held March 9th, 2026, at 11am at Joe Budd

Youth Conservation Center (639 Pond Rd, Midway, FL 32343). In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to benefit the Rae Waddell pollinator garden at Joe Budd and camper scholarship: <https://wildlifeflorida.app.neoncrm.com/forms/19>

Kelly Barber of Bevis Funeral Home (85-385-2193 or www.bevisfh.com) is assisting the family with their arrangements.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAR 9. 11:00 AM (ET)

Joe Budd Youth Conservation Center
639 Pond Road
Midway, FL 32343

Tribute Wall

JH

“ David....I am so sorry to learn of the passing of your wife Rae....prayers to your family.

JOHN HARRIS - March 09 at 10:25 AM

IB

“ Iris B. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Rae La Jean Waddell.

Iris B. - March 08 at 01:11 AM



“ We all ,Hernandez bunch, send our condolences. Helping to share her love for nature ... we've all donated a tree. Prayers for Rae's family and many friends. God bless you all. Love Edie and Val

Edie Hernandez - March 01 at 05:01 PM

EG

“ Edie G. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Rae La Jean Waddell.

Edie G. - March 01 at 04:43 PM

CB

“ Thank you for trusting me with the privilege of caring for Rae in her final days. The three days we shared will always stay with me. They touched me deeply, not only as a nurse, but as a person. Rae was a true fighter with a beautiful spirit, and it was an honor to be by her side.

To the Waddell family and Becky, thank you for your kindness and for allowing me to be part of such meaningful moments.

Celeste Berrios - February 22 at 08:44 AM

WF

“ You were more than a mentor; you were a guiding light. Your lessons will forever be etched in my heart. Rae believed in me when I sometimes doubted myself, and for that I will always be grateful. I will forever cherish the knowledge, encouragement, and unwavering belief she had in me.

Forever in our hearts, you will be deeply missed.

– Whitney Finaldi

Whitney Finaldi - February 17 at 08:37 AM

SS

“ Rae was one of my special students at NFC. Later on I was able to reconnect with her as I taught her children Erin and Amy. What a treat that was! She invited our first graders to spend the day at Joe Budd learning how to fish and discovering so many wonderful things on our nature walk. This was a highlight for all first graders. She always had a special place in my heart! So sorry to learn that she had to deal with these health issues. I know she will be dearly missed.

Sharon and Coach Shifflett

Sharon Shifflett - February 15 at 08:39 PM

JC

“ So sorry to hear about Rae. She was a sweet girl!

Janis Cayson Culp

janis cayson culp - February 14 at 02:09 PM

LA

Ray was a beautiful woman with a beautiful soul, and her contributions to the Florida outdoors will live forever. I was proud to know her

Lance - February 14 at 03:34 PM

VE

Rae was a beautiful person inside and out. While I have known her for a short time she grew to be very special to me. She was a wonderful mentor, co-worker, and friend. I am thankful that I had her to confide in during my bout with cancer this last year.

Valerie Edenfield - February 17 at 08:04 AM

TF

While I never had the opportunity to meet Rae, I have known David for a very long time, and I know that he deeply loved Rae. My thoughts and prayers are with David, her children and her mother. So sorry for your loss.

Taroub Faraj-Capece - February 17 at 08:18 AM