



## Steven Lawrence Howells

December 29, 1952 - February 17, 2016

Steven Lawrence Howells, age 63, of Lanark Village, Florida, passed away on February 17, 2016, having lived a meaningful and vibrant life.

Steve was born on December 29, 1952, to Edwin and Martha (Crawford) Howells. He was raised in and around Edwardsville, Illinois, along with his brother and sisters: Barbara, Mike, Donna, Patricia, Susan, Rita, and Gail. He was an accomplished wrestler in high school and college, and he earned a B.S. degree from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale in 1978. On June 19, 1982, Steve married his best friend, the former Debra Gaye Compton, on St. George Island, Florida. They are blessed with two beloved children and many grandchildren.

Steve was a dominant force in the protection and advancement of human and civil rights of persons with disabilities. He was particularly passionate about children's issues. During a lifetime of service, he helped improve the lives of thousands of Floridians with disabilities and their families through education efforts, individual case work, direct services, systemic change, and public policy advocacy.

Prior to his retirement in 2013, Steve focused his professional efforts through his employment at a center for independent living, the Governor's Commission on Persons with Disabilities later known as the Advocacy Center, and as the executive director of the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST). At one time or another during his more than 20 years with the Advocacy Center, he managed every federally-mandated program in

that organization. He ran the Client Assistance Program, actively enforced the Americans with Disabilities Act and disability education laws, and was involved in the oversight in Florida of the federal Assistive Technology Act, along with many other initiatives. He was particularly proud of his essential contributions to class action lawsuits by the Advocacy Center, such as Hunter vs. Chiles and Estaban vs. Cook, which resulted in profound changes for children and other persons with disabilities. Among other accomplishments while with FAAST, Steve successfully advocated for a change in state law to allow assistive technology devices to follow the person.

Steve's contributions also included extensive leadership and active participation on many statewide councils, commissions, and boards to which he was appointed by governors of both political parties. He served several terms on the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council where he filled various leadership roles, served as vice chair of the Foundation for Indigent Guardianship, served as chair of the Florida Weatherization Commission, and was a member of the Governor's Accessible Electronic and Information Technology Task Force, to name just a few. Furthermore, he was appointed by the chief justice to serve on the Court Accessibility Committee, where he was involved in developing a survey instrument, providing training, and assessing the accessibility of courthouses across the state. He was selected for several federal councils and reviews projects, as well.

He was the recipient of multiple prestigious awards and recognitions including the inaugural Stephen R. Wise Advocacy Award conferred in 2013 by the Florida Rehabilitation Council and the Public Employee of the Year award conferred in 2012 by The Able Trust. Also of note was Steve's selection as a Community Hero Olympic Relay Torchbearer for the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, as the torch passed through Tallahassee.

Steve exemplified public service and maintained the highest ethical standards. He was kind, compassionate, and always made time to help those in need. Moreover, he was willing to share his knowledge and expertise, particularly with future generations of advocates.

Steve was devoted to his wife, Debbie, and their two children: Jill Suzanne Saura (Jon) of Excelsior Springs, Missouri, and Jeremy Lawrence Howells (Michelle) of Orlando, Florida. Without a doubt the greatest joy of Steve's life was being a loving grandfather to his eight grandchildren, Keely Ellis (Colin), Cody McDonald, Nicholas Saura, Lily Denish, Camden Saura, Chloe Howells, Isabella Sara, and Reese Saura, and one great grandson, Liam Ellis. Steve also leaves behind many cherished friends and extended family members. In accordance with Steve's wishes, no services will be held. For those wishing to make a contribution in his honor, the family respectfully suggests St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, P.O. Box 1000 Department 142, Memphis, TN 38148, Shriners Hospitals for Children, P.O. Box 1525, Ranson, WV 25438 or the children's charity of your choice. Amber Miller of Bevis Funeral Home, Harvey-Young Chapel is assisting the family (850-926-3333 or [www.bevisfh.com](http://www.bevisfh.com)).

# Tribute Wall

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“ I worked with Steve for two years at the Advocacy Center in the early 90's. He was a good friend and tireless advocate. He will be missed. My condolences to Debbie and their family. Jo Schaden

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**Jo Schaden** - February 19, 2016 at 09:22 AM

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“ My life has been significantly blessed habecause of meeting Steve at the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired in the 1960's. I attribute building os self confidence and esteem to Steve's family and today still hold a very treasured friend ship with his sister, Rita. I will always love my adopted howells family and have a very special corner of my heart forever reserved for Steve and his family. I send prayers, and love to his Wife, Debbie. Thank each of you in the Howells family for playing a very major part in my life and providing so many fond memories in Collinsville!!

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**Dan Thompson** - February 18, 2016 at 06:39 AM