



Miss Frances A. Pizzola

July 24, 1961 - July 12, 2019

Frances A. Pizzola, 57, of Cortland passed away surrounded by her loving family, on Friday July 12, 2019 at Crouse Hospital after a brief illness. Born July 24, 1961 in Cortland, Fran was the daughter of Michele and Carmela Testa Pizzola and was a Cortland resident her entire life.

Fran was a faithful member of both St. Anthony's Church and Grace Christian Fellowship. Fran graduated from Cortland High School in 1980 and attended SUNY Cobleskill pursuing a career in the medical field. In December 1981, while sledding, she broke her neck and sustained a spinal cord injury that caused her paralysis. Ultimately this came to shape her life's mission in advocating for all people with disabilities. Fran went on to complete her BS and MS in education at SUNY Cortland. Noticing the barriers surrounding her, she began a grassroots effort, which led to the organization of the Cortland County Accessibility Committee (CCAC).

In 1998, through Fran's work and dedication, she founded Access to Independence Cortland County, Inc. as the 36th Independent Living Center in New York State. Fran received many professional honors; most notably in 2001-NYS-Senate-"Women of Distinction", 2003-Cortland High School-"Wall of Fame", 2017-NYSILC-NYS Disability Hall of Fame and 2018 -Access to Independence Shining Star Award.

As passionate as she was about her commitment to advocacy work, she was even more passionate about her family, friends, and faith. She was the glue that kept our family close. Whether it was card night, game night, wine night, or just any old night, great times were always had around a table with Fran. Through her love of faith and music she coordinated Joyful Noise Ministry and actively participated in Sunday Night Alive

Fran truly appreciated her Momma's cooking and she loved to take adventures to find new places and new foods to try. Everything was her "favorite"! Fran appreciated the beauty of nature, especially being in the backyard among the flowers that she planted with her father and is tended to by her Momma. She loved butterflies and sunshine.

She is survived by her mother, Carmela Testa Pizzola; fiancé, Paul Dudek; brother, Michael (Mika) Pizzola; sister Maria (Mike) Dafoe; four nieces, Marina (Jeff) Prince, Adrianna, Sophia and Nina Pizzola; godmothers, Gelsa and Lisa Pizzola as well as the rest of her loving family. Fran was preceded in death by her father; Michele "Mike" Pizzola in 2015.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. in St. Anthony's Church. Prayers of committal will follow in St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery. The family will be present to receive friends on Tuesday from 4-8 p.m. at St. Anthony's Church, on Pomeroy St in Cortland

While we are heartbroken, we know Fran has traded her wheelchair in for wings!

Contributions in lieu of flowers may be made in Fran's memory to: Access to Independence 26 N. Main St. Cortland, St. Anthony's Church 59 N. Main St. Cortland, or Grace Christian Fellowship 1250 Fisher Ave Cortland.

Condolences may also be sent to the family by visiting www.riccardifuneralho

me.com Arrangements are under the direction of Riccardi Funeral Home 69
N. Main St., Cortland, N.Y.

Cemetery Details

St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery

4101 West Rd
Cortland, NY 13045

Tribute Wall

TC

“ *Therese, Amy, Mary, and Cathy purchased the Garden Accent Stone - "Your memory is..." for the family of Miss Frances A. Pizzola.*



Therese, Amy, Mary, and Cathy - July 20, 2019 at 07:08 PM

TT

“ *Teresa Tyrrell lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola*



Teresa Tyrrell - July 18, 2019 at 11:47 PM

TT

“ *Thank you for your kindness and understanding when I asked for help. You were a brave woman and very strong in faith.*

Teresa Tyrrell - July 18, 2019 at 11:39 PM

TD

“ *Toni DeSanta-Williams lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola*



Toni DeSanta-Williams - July 18, 2019 at 07:59 PM

JL

“ *As School Superintendent, I appreciated Fran’s advice regarding our facilities. As friend, I appreciated her calm spirit and interest in the natural world. Thanks, Fran.*

John E. Lutz - July 18, 2019 at 03:41 PM

JW

“ *To all the Pizzola Family whose loss of Frances must be truly a sacrifice and heart felt suffering, the Ward family would like you to know that we grieve with you and know that she will be lifted by angels into God's arms and her limitations will never be strained again. We love all of you and a mass will be said for the repose of Fran's soul by our own Fr. Gabriel Ward, love from the Wards.*

John Ward - July 18, 2019 at 01:54 PM

CF

“ *Fran and I met through Zonta...we always had a good time whenever we were together! Lots of laughs and wonderful conversations that often included beach talk—we both shared a passion for tropical vacations and sand and sun and beaches and fruity drinks!*
I loved Fran and will never forget the amazing life lessons she taught me, through her persistent, positive and uplifting personality. Heaven has another angel, who I know is now on her beach and will be swimming soon! 🙏🙏

chris frare - July 18, 2019 at 08:51 AM

BP

“ *Fran always has a big smile on her face. She was always fun to be around. She will be very much missed.*
Barbara Preston



Barbara A Preston - July 17, 2019 at 06:14 PM

KG

“ *What a wonderful person, heartbreaking loss. My thoughts and prayers are with you all. May Fran rest in peace. So sorry, Keith Gruber*



Keith Gruber - July 17, 2019 at 03:42 PM

CC

“ *Carmella and family and friends
Deepest sympathy on your loss.
An honor and privilege to have known such a bright, dedicated,
motivated angels whose efforts established an organization which
continues to enrich the lives of others as she did.
The Pearly Gates of Heaven will be forever accessible as your
angel advocate Frances
Is in paradise
Charlie Capanzano*

Charlie Capanzano - July 17, 2019 at 01:19 PM

SU

“ *Siera Underwood lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola*



Siera Underwood - July 17, 2019 at 08:13 AM

SU

“ *Fran was such a great person. She inspired so many people with disabilities. Fran loved all the contemporary Christian music that was sang at Sunday night alive. She always sang along with them. Fran even took pictures and video recorded some of the practice or even the service. When I saw her she was always in a great mood never in a bad mood. She was so happy when she was surrounded by family and friends especially Paul. Fran will be greatly missed by many. Sorry for your loss.*

Siera Underwood - July 17, 2019 at 08:12 AM

DU

Fran, you was such a BLESSING! You always had a warm wonderful smile and such strong faith, filled with encouragement. Everyone could see how happy you and Paul was together, a power team for our Lord! Jim and I will always remember what a sweet wonderful child of God you was! Our prayers to all family and Paul. We are so sorry for everyone that you have experienced this loss.

Debbie Underwood - July 17, 2019 at 01:27 PM

SF

“ I have always admired Fran for all that she accomplished in spite of her disabilities. Access to independence has made so many people believe that there is a purpose for every one of us. I am well aware of so much more that needs to be done with sidewalks and other areas that are hard to navigate with a walker or wheelchair. I can not imagine coping day in and day out without the help of loved ones. God blessed Fran with a family that supported her as a person and with her goals. Bless you all!

Susan J Fitts - July 16, 2019 at 06:30 PM

DS

“ Dearest Carmela and family - I am so very sorry to learn that Fran has passed away. Please know you are on my mind and I am flooded with memories of years gone by. May God bless you all.
Jean Lintern Stoker and family

Donna Stoker - July 16, 2019 at 01:04 PM

BU

“ So sorry for your loss. Prayers are with you.

Bonita Underwood



Bonnie Underwood - July 16, 2019 at 10:57 AM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Miss Frances A. Pizzola.

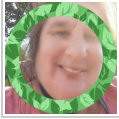


July 15, 2019 at 09:22 PM

RP

“ *Very sorry to hear of the passing of Fran, she was a great lady and a joy to talk to !!*

Rick Partigianoni - July 15, 2019 at 08:26 PM



Sorry for the loss . prays family and friends . oxox

Crystal Elliott - July 15, 2019 at 08:33 PM

ML

I got to know Fran through Access To Independence & I thought she was a nice person.

Marni L. Fuller

Marni L.Fuller - July 16, 2019 at 09:34 PM

AW

“ *It was truly a sad day to hear you passed. Heaven has gained another angel. Prayers for Paul and the Pizzola family.*



Alyssa Whitney - July 15, 2019 at 06:51 PM

AE

“ *My heart is broken on the loss of this beautiful soul. RIP dear Fran and fly high! An angel has gained her wings. I'll miss seeing you at the St Anthony Festival*



Anna M Elshennawi - July 15, 2019 at 06:39 PM

PD

“*Fran’s life is truly inspirational. My condolences and prayers to my friends, Mika and Mike Pizzola, and to the entire Pizzola family for their great loss.* ❤️

pamela doherty - July 15, 2019 at 06:04 PM

JP

“*julie m pantas purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Miss Frances A. Pizzola.*



julie m pantas - July 15, 2019 at 03:21 PM

DW

“*Fran touched my soul every time I saw her. She will be missed beyond words.* 💜

Debbie Walls - July 15, 2019 at 10:24 AM

JR

“*Fran was an inspiration to every one she met. She will be so missed. Fly Free Fran. You are so loved.*

Jean E. Rightmire - July 15, 2019 at 08:59 AM

BW

“*Fran was a dear colleague who advocated and pursued progress on issues for the disability community, I enjoyed her passion, hard work, and humor. She will be missed. My deepest sympathies to Paul and the Pizzola family.*

*Brad Williams
NYSILC*

Brad Williams - July 15, 2019 at 08:31 AM

EH

“*Fran was such an inspirational person and I feel honored that I knew Fran and her lovely family. My deepest condolences to Ma mma, Paul and the rest of the family,.*



Eden Harrington-Hall

Eden Harrington-Hall - July 15, 2019 at 08:21 AM

TM

“*Heaven has gained an angel. Fran, you made a difference for a lot of people, and had such a good heart. You will be missed in this town. My sincerest condolences to your family and to Paul.*

Terry Mingle - July 15, 2019 at 06:57 AM

SG

“*My sympathies to Paul, Momma and all family members. I remember what a great time Rosie and I had when we had dinner with Paul and Fran downtown and the nice chats during St. Anthony's weekend.*

Scott Goodrich - July 15, 2019 at 06:26 AM

KW

“ Momma Pizzola and family we are sorry for your loss. Fran was a wonderful friend whose beautiful smile will be missed.

Kona Whitney - July 14, 2019 at 11:35 PM

KW

“ Kona Whitney lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola



Kona Whitney - July 14, 2019 at 11:26 PM

TC

“ My deepest condolences to the Pizzola family. Fran was an amazing woman who worked so hard to make an impact on so many people's lives. She taught me a great deal while I interned at ATI. I just wish I could have worked with her more. The things she taught me will stay with me always.

Tina Carden - July 14, 2019 at 10:48 PM

AB

“ Amy Carpenter Bancroft lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola



Amy Carpenter Bancroft - July 14, 2019 at 10:46 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Miss Frances A. Pizzola.*



July 14, 2019 at 10:35 PM



“ *Our thoughts and prayers are with you all. She touched the lives of so many---such a bright light shining wherever she was! We noticed the sun shining sooooo very bright all weekend long (brighter than usual), and can't help but think she may have had something to do with it! ---The Kevin Ossit Family (Kevin, Sheila, Zack, Nathan and Maggie)*



The Kevin Ossit Family - July 14, 2019 at 09:37 PM



“ *My deepest condolences to the Pizzola family and all of Fran's friends. I cant remember a time in my life where I didn't feel honored to be her friend, from being kids at Randall School saying each others' names backwards to being adults discussing the power of faith. I will miss you Secnarf!*

Rosie Taravella - July 14, 2019 at 09:23 PM



“ *RIP FRAN, YOU WERE ONE OF THE BEST !!*

Rick Partigianoni - July 14, 2019 at 09:23 PM

ND

“ Nancy & Bruce Dorn lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola



Nancy & Bruce Dorn - July 14, 2019 at 08:19 PM

TC

“ Paul and Family,
You are all in our thoughts and prayers. Fran was such a blessing to all that met her! Fly high Fran!



Tammy Beardsley and Doris Conway - July 14, 2019 at 08:10 PM

KC

“ Kevin Jackie Cute lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola



Kevin Jackie Cute - July 14, 2019 at 07:24 PM

ME

“ Matt And Kelly Eaton lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola



Matt and Kelly Eaton - July 14, 2019 at 07:13 PM

AR

“ Audrey Rider lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola



Audrey Rider - July 14, 2019 at 07:00 PM

KR

“ Kevin And Cindy Russell lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola



kevin and Cindy Russell - July 14, 2019 at 06:37 PM

CD

“ I met Frannie @ Cobleskill, then lost track of her until she started meeting up with my sister, Denise, at disability events. Such a small world. Her strength of spirit, love of life and family shown through everything she did. I am so sorry for your loss. Praying that you take some comfort in others memories of the amazing wonderful woman you were lucky to call daughter, sister, friend. Caroline DiNoto-Laing

cdlaing - July 14, 2019 at 06:28 PM

LG

“ *Frances was like a beautiful rose — as lovely on the inside as she was beautiful on the outside. I counted it a privilege to meet her and her wonderful, close family when Fran was first injured and have many happy memories of times spent with her...over the years since. Her love of people and especially her love for the Lord were precious. She is whole and more alive than ever in her Heavenly Home now. Fran Blessed my heart with her courage, faith and love. My prayers are with Carmela and the entire Pizzola family, the love of her life, Paul Dudek, Fran’s friends and all those in the family of friends who benefited from Fran’s advocacy on their collective behalf’s. I’m hoping to visit you all in the next couple of weeks. I’m praying for your comfort.*

Lois R. Griswold - July 14, 2019 at 05:29 PM

LF

“ *Fran was and will continue on being a beautiful angel..prayers to all family.*

lisa fezza - July 14, 2019 at 04:28 PM

DB

“ *Thoughts and prayers to all Fran's family. We were friends in h.s and spent a lot of time at Yaman Park. i remember her constant joy and sense of adventure. She lived life fully and was inspiring how much she overcame and accomplished. She was a bright light in the world and is an example for us all. Be free of your burdens, Fran. You made a difference in the lives of those around you.*

deb balliet - July 14, 2019 at 04:05 PM



“ It is with great sadness that I read of Fran's passing. While we met professionally, she made it easy to feel like a friend. I greatly admired her spirit and problem solving abilities. Her light shone through everything she did and everyone she met. Though I had not seen her much in the last few years, I still feel a great loss for all of us. My prayers are with her family.
 Much love to you Fran...spread your wings at last.
 Robin Sandwick

Robin Sandwick - July 14, 2019 at 04:05 PM



“ I went to school with Fran. She was an amazing friend to all that she knew! Fly high Fran and May you Rest In Peace!❤️

Penny Kane - July 14, 2019 at 03:12 PM



“ Kristin Stone lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola



Kristin Stone - July 14, 2019 at 02:39 PM



“ I went to school with Fran as well as knowing her beautiful family. I knew Fran as a strong, brave and courageous woman who astounded me as well as showing that a person can overcome any hurdle. I thought a lot of Fran and she will remain in my heart. She was a beautiful, caring, and loving friend to all who knew her. I will miss you Fran.



Karen Williams - July 14, 2019 at 02:33 PM

BC

“ *Bobbi Coville lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola*



Bobbi Coville - July 14, 2019 at 02:31 PM



“ *I met Frances at Randall School A Long Time Ago. From the start; Frances was making friends with everyone (3/4's of them were her Italian Relatives! 😊). We all learned our ABC's, Skinned Our Heart's and Our Knees, Learned To Say Thank You and Please, Never Forgot The Movie about The Birds And Bees, But After It All The Love We Learned Never Leaves! I Love You Frances. Peace To Your/ And Paul's Family*

Faith Phoenix - July 14, 2019 at 02:10 PM

PN

“ *Paula N lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola*



Paula N - July 14, 2019 at 02:01 PM

SM

“ *Frances is one of our old neighborhood friends. Growing up on the "south end" had it's benefits of a lot of Italian neighbors. And as with all Italians ultimately your friends' cousins are your cousins too! That was Frances to us.*

It was devastating when she had her accident but in her true form of determination she persevered to do great things for people with disabilities. She packed in a lot of success and fun in her 57 short years. She was an amazing woman and will be forever in our hearts.

Our thoughts are with her family!

Sandro, Denise and James Mironti

Sandro and Denise Mironti - July 14, 2019 at 01:50 PM

CG

“ *Prayers to the family, I am so sorry for the loss of your beautiful daughter Fran. She was such a kind and loving soul and I am honored to have known her. May you find peace and comfort in the days ahead.*

*Char Glezen
Richford, NY*

Charlotte Glezen - July 14, 2019 at 01:45 PM

IB

“ *Fran was an amazing women who will be truly missed in the family and the community we could talk for hours about taking cruises as that was one of her favorite things, every time we got together we could pickup right were left off even if it was years later! Fly high Frannie*



Irene & Jim Berardi - July 14, 2019 at 01:36 PM

Judith
L. Stevely

“ *In memory of a wonderful Lady ,the Stevely Family*



Judith L. Stevely - July 14, 2019 at 01:26 PM

ER

“ *She was a great lady, the first time I met her was when she decided she wanted to co-teach a class at SUNY Cortland. We learned so much in that class. One thing I remember here telling our class was, it was ok to hit the wheelchair buttons to open the doors automatically. She said it was good to do that because you could then report ones that were broken because people in wheelchairs wouldn't be able to get in if it wasn't working properly. She will be missed by family and the community.*

Erin - July 14, 2019 at 01:12 PM

RC

“ *Robin & Chip lit a candle in memory of Miss Frances A. Pizzola*



Robin & Chip - July 14, 2019 at 01:03 PM

JP

To Frans family and Paul, Fran is with her Savior and Healer.Fran was a great insiration to all who knew her. Everyone is in my prayers. John Prentice

John H. Prentice - July 15, 2019 at 09:11 AM

JO

Sincerest condolences to family and friends. I remember her as an outstanding student and later advocate for the physically impaired. RIP.

JAMES OCHSNER - July 15, 2019 at 12:01 PM

JW

Finding something good to say about Fran is easy. Finding something bad to say is impossible. I will miss her.

Jarett Withers

Jarett Withers - July 16, 2019 at 08:05 PM