



Melissa James

MAY 7, 1982 - APR 14, 2024



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It is with heavy hearts that we announce the sudden and unexpected passing of our beloved Melissa Mary (Kowalski) James, cherished wife, mother, daughter, sister, aunt, and friend. Born in Springfield, Massachusetts on May 7, 1982, to Peter and Mary Liz Kowalski, Melissa had a beautiful soul that truly made the lives of everyone she encountered better for having met her. Melissa's radiant spirit departed from this world surrounded by love on April 14, 2024, in Salt Lake City, Utah. She is survived by her husband Shawn James; her children: Brooklyn and Brayden, Beckham and Juni; her father Peter Kowalski and her sister Sarah; her mother-in-law Marva James and her beloved in-laws, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews. Melissa was preceded in death by her mother Mary Liz, her brother Kyle Kowalski, and her father-in-law Gordon James.

Melissa was rewarded with success throughout her life thanks to her optimism, grit, and determination. In her youth, Melissa set numerous swimming records with the Falcons Swim Team. She was also a local trailblazer in the explosion of girls' basketball in the late 90s. Starting when she and her sister broke the gender barrier in the under-10 league at Nelson Sanders Basketball camp, Melissa showed a passion and skill in basketball that served her well in life. Her years of practice paid off in high school, as she helped Minnechaug Regional High School win the Western Massachusetts title four years in a row, going on to win the state championships for 3 of those years, with an undefeated 25-0 record her senior year.

Melissa's dedication led to a full scholarship to Northeastern University, where she was captain of the women's basketball team. Entering the starting line-up as a freshman, she retained that spot for all 115 games of her career, making 3-point field goals in each one. In fact, Melissa broke the Northeastern Women's Basketball 3-point field goal record with her career 245 3-pointers, holding that record for over a decade. She scored 1,244 points in high school, earning a spot on Minnechaug's 1,000-point banner of fame, then scored 1,248 points in college. It was through basketball that Melissa made dear lifelong friends and met the love of her life, her husband,



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Shawn James. She and Shawn had a fairytale romance, living all over the world together while she supported his overseas basketball career, visiting over 15 countries, building a beautiful home in North Carolina, and starting a family together.

From the time she was a young girl, Melissa had one dream: to be a mom. Not only did she become a mom, but Melissa was the most devoted wife and mother anyone could ask for. She made each member of her family feel loved while supporting their professional, academic, and athletic endeavors, seamlessly organizing busy schedules, travel arrangements, and the meticulous running of her household. In starting her multicultural family, it was important to Melissa to carefully blend her culture with her husband's, giving respect to each. Melissa loved spending time with her mother-in-law learning how to cook delicious Guyanese cuisine and also enjoyed making her own mother's favorite 5 spice chicken wing recipe for dozens of family members and friends at her legendary gatherings. Melissa was an impeccable hostess, always willing to find space in her home for just one more person. She was observant of small details, showing her friends and family how important they were to her, remembering names and birthdays and ways to make all those she met feel unique and special. While maintaining steadfast dedication to her family, Melissa also found success in her own career, from starting small businesses to earning her license in real estate, to working remotely in talent recruitment.

To those who knew Melissa, and even those lucky enough to have met her just once, she was a light. She led with love and kindness every day, for every encounter. Words cannot adequately describe the immeasurable impact Melissa has had on everyone. Family and friends remember her boundless energy, her contagious smile and quick laugh, her witty humor, and her ability to "keep things real" by offering direct and honest advice sprinkled with love. She was always up to date - whether you lived near or far and was ready to lend a shoulder or offer a supportive ear. She was everyone's #1 fan. Her friends and family also fondly celebrate Melissa's quirks, such as singing 90's and 2000's R&B in the car, enjoying a good Chick-fil-a sandwich or her Diet Coke and Doritos, and playing table games (especially the card game Horrible House Pets) with just as much competitive spirit and determination as she had in winning state championships. But most of all, we remember all the ways Melissa would put everyone's needs first, because making others happy wasn't something she considered a sacrifice: it was her calling. She may be gone from our sight, but her spirit will forever live on in our hearts as we are called to carry on her legacy. Rest in peace, dear Melissa; words cannot do justice to how deeply you will be missed.

Please join us as we honor Melissa James, because to know her was to love her.



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In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial donation to the James' GoFundMe Fund online at <https://gofund.me/8a5cf759> , by check payable to "The James Children," or directly through Zelle to nbabrooklyn@yahoo.com .

Calling hours will be held on Saturday evening, May 4 from 5-7 PM at James Funeral Home, 10520 Arahova Dr, Huntersville, NC. The funeral service will also take place at James Funeral Home at 1 PM on Sunday May 5, immediately followed by a Christian burial service at Northlake Memorial Gardens, 11001 Alexandriana Rd, Huntersville. For those unable to attend, the funeral will be livestreamed to watch at <https://www.jamesfuneralhomelkn.com/obituaries/Melissa-James-2/#!/PhotosVideos/00000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000001/WebcastVideo>

James Funeral Home, of Huntersville, is serving the family and obituary lovingly written by the family.



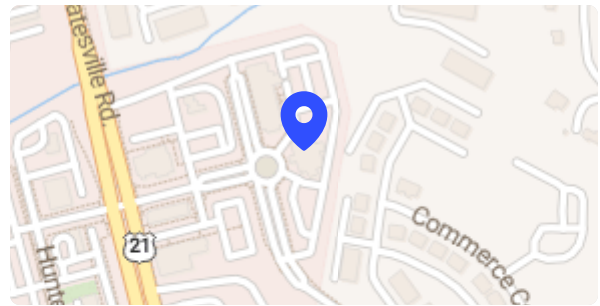
Events

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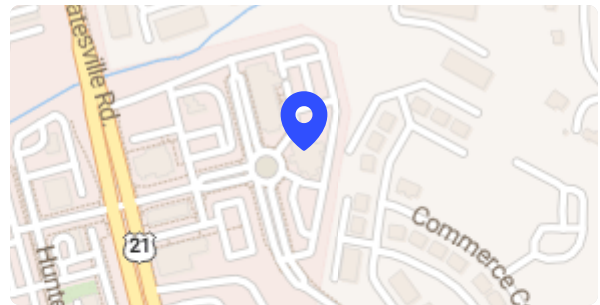
Visitation

- Saturday, May 4, 2024**
- 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM ET
- James Funeral Home**
10520 Arahova Dr, Huntersville NC 28078



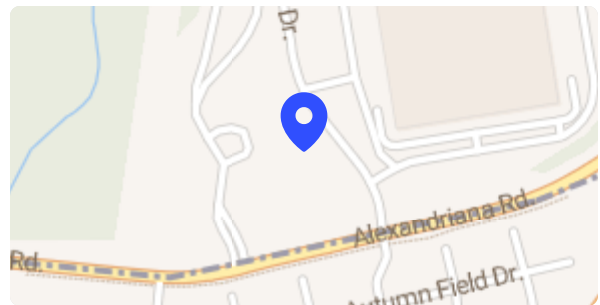
Funeral Service

- Sunday, May 5, 2024**
- 1:00 PM ET
- James Funeral Home**
10520 Arahova Dr, Huntersville NC 28078



Cemetery Details

- NorthLake Memorial Gardens**
11001 Alexandriana Rd, Huntersville NC 28078
- (704) 584-9004**





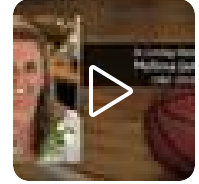
Tribute Wall

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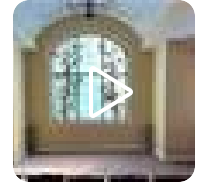
James Funeral Home shared a **Video**.



May 5 at 8:50 AM



James Funeral Home shared a **Webcast Video**.



April 21 at 9:21 AM



SF

-Sfc posted:

What a privilege it is to have known Mel and the beauty she brought and will continue to bring to this world through the beloved James' children. We are sending all our love from afar and thank the organizers for allowing us to witness the celebration of Mel's life from overseas. Blessings and love to all who know Mel and especially Shawn and the kids.

April 29 at 5:04 AM



KM

Kathleen McCormick posted:

Heartbreaking news she was a beautiful woman with a beautiful family. She will live on in the smiles of her children in their beautiful big brown eyes. Rest in Peace

April 25 at 2:37 PM



CF

Christine (Rutigliano) Farrar posted:

I'd like to express my deepest condolences to Shawn, their beautiful children and families. Melissa and I met while working in the Leased Properties office at NU (and eventually Shawn too). From day one we clicked; she was one of the most genuine, honest and caring friends. Always putting other's needs ahead of her own and checking in over the years since. We shared so many memories with our LP family - she was the reason for my TKO addiction from Chicken Lou's, it was an office staple. I was also one of the lucky ones who got to watch Shawn and Melissa's love grow from the start - when you know, you know, and they were it for one another from the beginning. This news is truly heartbreaking, and no words can capture what a special person Melissa was to me and so many others. I will cherish all of our memories and keep your family in my prayers as they navigate this sudden loss. You will be missed dearly my friend

April 21 at 7:18 PM



Tribute Wall

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Michael Trabucco posted:

My friend Melissa, She was part of the first group of students at NU in the Lease Properties. Always with a smile on her face and never a bad word to say. Always helpful and sincere in dealing with students. She made my job so easy. Her comments were like don't worry about it Mikie T we got itand she always did.You will be missed....Shawn was also part of my Team ... Also a great personMy condolences to her family and Friends

April 20 at 4:35 AM



Media

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James Funeral Home shared a **Video**.

May 5 at 8:50 AM





Media

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James Funeral Home shared a **Webcast Video**.

April 21 at 9:21 AM



Mark Washington Jr April 21 at 4:45 PM

Melissa was such a beautiful soul. Shawn and I were roommates freshman year at northeastern university and I remember walking down Huntington Ave with him the first time he saw her. He told me that Melissa was going to be his wife one day. He was persistent and made his dreams come to fruition. She made him the happiest man in the world by becoming his wife and giving him 4 beautiful children. For anyone that has had the pleasure of meeting her, especially her friends and family, this is a very tragic loss and she will be dearly missed. Love you Mel!



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Melissa by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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