# Kevin James Gardner

We are heartbroken to announce the passing of Kevin James Gardner, at his home in Shawnigan Lake, on the morning of September 23, 2025.

Born July 1, 1968 in Sidney, BC (Resthaven Hospital), Kevin is survived by his wife Louise Callbeck, parents Ron and Lynn Gardner, sister Karen (Dave) Nicolson, niece Marah, nephew Taylor (Karli), numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, neighbours, and dog Kiko.

We could write a book of Kevin’s interests and accomplishments, but instead we will just cover some highlights.

As a child, Kevin quickly learned independence, resilience, dedication and the art of hard work, while excelling in school, dominating in sports, and developing a passion for music. Kevin wanted to learn everything and was willing to try anything. His brain and curiosity never turned off.

Kevin’s love of learning began at Sidney Elementary and carried on through Greenglade Elementary, North Saanich Middle School and Parkland Secondary from which he graduated in 1986. After high school Kevin went to Langara Community College and UVic where he completed a degree in English and History in 1992.

After school, Kevin worked as a tutor before being hired as part of the planning committee for the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria. Kevin thoroughly enjoyed being part of this event, especially meeting athletes from around the world. A highlight from that time was an unauthorized excursion with Klee Wyck, the games’ mascot, to his Grannie’s for Thanksgiving. After the games, Kevin spent his career working for the Ministry of Transportation, first as staff, then as a Contractor. Many lifelong friends were made through work and

Kevin was part of a group of past employees that met regularly for dinner and hockey games.

Volunteering was important to Kevin and he served as the co-commissioner of the BC Wheelchair Basketball League, chairperson of the Victoria Wheelchair Sports Association, and as a member of the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association's Athletics Committee. Kevin loved working with young athletes, spending many hours coaching at various sports camps and several teams at the BC Winter Games, and participating in demo teams around the province.

Kevin was athletically inclined and began his sports career at the age of 9, competing as a swimmer in the 1977 BC Games for the Physically Disabled. From then on, Kevin was hooked on sports and tried numerous over his lifetime, including road hockey, tennis, volleyball, curling, golf, sit-skiing, sledge hockey, horseback riding, golf and cricket.

In 1983 Kevin chose to focus on wheelchair basketball and track and field/wheelchair racing. Racing saw Kevin compete in many events, with a focus on 1500m and greater distances. The sport saw Kevin go from local events to BC and Canada Summer Games to the 1986 Pan American Games in Peurto Rico, the 1988 Olympic demo trials in Brussels and the 1988 Seoul Paralympics. Kevin broke 2 hours (1.59.31) in his one and only marathon, and learned a valuable lesson not to try to stay with the race leaders.

Kevin was a member of the Victoria Wheelchair Basketball Team, the Vancouver Wheelwings, the Cable Cars, and the BC Wheelchair Basketball Club. His teams competed in the National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA), BC Winter Games and National Basketball Championships, where they won a bronze medal in 1986 and 1987.

Once the competitive era ended, Kevin continued to be active, playing and coaching wheelchair basketball with the Victoria

Wheelchair Basketball Club, then turning to hiking, walking, swimming, weight lifting, and pushing his wheelchair along Dallas Road and through his Shawnigan Lake neighbourhood.

Sports were not just for playing, but also for watching, with baseball, hockey and soccer being favourites. Along with a love of spectating, Kevin also had a passion for learning everything there was to know about the sports and had an encyclopedic knowledge of dates, names and stats.

Music was Kevin's other passion, both listening and playing. As a teenager, Kevin taught himself how to play guitar, and was hardly ever seen without an instrument in his hands. Once Kevin discovered GarageBand, he began recording and creating CDs, initially for his Grannie. In the end, Kevin created 15 Cds. More recently, Kevin and friend John had started making YouTube videos of their playing together, when they weren't record shopping together. Being the inquisitive type, Kevin tried his hand at other instruments too, including mandolin, accordion, African djembe drum, African balafon, and banjitar among others. Kevin's taste in music spanned genres and decades, ranging from Bob Dylan to The Pogues to Spirit of the West to traditional music from Newfoundland, Ireland, and West Africa. Opportunities to play publicly were received enthusiastically. Kevin performed with The Brambling Boys at many local markets, especially the Deep Cove Market. The Brambling Boys were introduced by friend Woody to local musician and composer Dan Page, who signed them up to play live music for their Newfoundland Dance group. Kevin most enjoyed playing music with close friends, and was very encouraging of those who were new to playing guitar.

Having grown up in Sidney, Kevin developed a love of the ocean and enjoyed many boating excursions via power boat, sail boat and canoe to the Gulf Islands. Favourites include Sidney, Portland, Rum and Wallace Islands.

Kevin was a voracious reader, with his house full of his

favourite books. Other passions of Kevin's included chess, art, history, Shakespeare, poetry, travel (Japan, Cuba, Newfoundland, and many roadtrips through BC and the USA), camping, hiking, walks in the woods with Kiko, stamp collecting and current events. There was nothing Kevin wouldn't try, even bungee jumping and sky diving!

Our family wish to extend our deepest gratitude to the plethora of doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, dieticians, speech language pathologists, lab technicians, receptionists, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, booking clerks, plus many others behind the scenes, from the Victoria Cancer Clinic, Home Nurse Care office and other entities within VIHA, for their incredible expertise and support this past year. Special thank you to Doctors Stene, Parimi, Ferguson, Turkdogan, and Mostachfi for their dedication and encouragement.

If desired, donations may be made in Kevin's name to BC Wheelchair Sports, BC Cancer – Victoria, or a charity of your choice.

Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, January 17th, 2026, from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm at the Saanich Fairgrounds Agricultural Hall. Instruments welcome!

Photos/stories/memories can be shared at celebratingkevin1968@gmail.com

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

McCall Gardens
www.mccallgardens.com

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