



Miss Cara Maureen McCollum

February 6, 1992 - February 22, 2016

Miss Cara Maureen McCollum, age 24, of New Jersey, formerly of Forrest City, died Monday, Feb. 22, 2016, in Camden, New Jersey, with her family by her side. She died as a result of injuries sustained in a car accident on Monday, Feb. 15.

Cara was born Feb. 6, 1992, the daughter of Rick and Maureen McCollum of Forrest City.

She was a 2010 graduate and valedictorian of Forrest City High School. She was also named an Arkansas Times Academic All-Star in 2010. She was a 2015 graduate of Princeton University, earning a Bachelor of Arts in English, with a concentration in journalism. She joined SNJ Today in July 2015 and worked there as a lead anchor until her death.

While in high school, Cara was involved in numerous local projects and organizations including the Mustang Dance Team, FCHS Mustang Tennis Team, Student Council Representative, a member of the Beta Club, National Honor Society and Principal's Club. She was also involved with the Delta Beta Sigma Sorority, serving in many roles including president and charity chairman. She was a member of the Youth Advisory Council of the St. Francis County Community Foundation, a long-time volunteer with SFC Elves and supporter of the Forrest City Humane Society. Cara was an active member of the First United Methodist Church where she served on the North East District Youth Council, played keyboard and sang in the Youth Praise Band "Grace Like Rain."

Cara moved to New Jersey after graduation, attending Princeton University from where she earned her degree.

In 2013, Cara won the Miss Island Resort Pageant, which allowed her to participate in the Miss New Jersey competition, being crowned Miss New Jersey in 2013. Her platform, "Giving the Gift of Reading" promoted youth literacy through her nonprofit organization, "The Birthday Book Project," an organization that gives gift-wrapped books to underprivileged children in kindergarten through fifth grades for their birthdays.

She represented New Jersey in the Miss America 2014 pageant. During her year-long reign as Miss New Jersey, Cara was named New Jersey Library Association Champion of the Year, as well as a Daily Points of Light winner for her advocacy of youth literacy. She also received numerous other awards and recognitions.

She was a member of the local P.E.O. Chapter BF, and Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority and University Cottage Club at Princeton, where she was also a cheerleader during her freshman year.

Cara is survived by her parents, Rick and Maureen McCollum of Forrest City; a brother, Derick McCollum of New York, formerly of Forrest City; her boyfriend Keith Jones and their puppy Charlie, along with numerous other relatives and friends.

She was preceded in death by her paternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick (Mary Allison "Tippe") McCollum Jr., and her maternal grandparents, Patricia Halpin Graves and George R. Buckingham, and a special grandparent, Emma Lee "Dee" Boles.

Visitation will be held Friday and Saturday, Feb. 26 and 27, 2016, from 5 to 7 p.m., at the McCollum family home located at 926 N. Forrest St., in Forrest City.

A celebration of Cara's life will be held at 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 28, 2016, at the First United Methodist Church in Forrest City.

A second memorial service is being planned in New Jersey and will be held at a later date.

The family asks that memorials be made to The Birthday Book Project, P.O. Box 411, Forrest City, AR 72336, or to a charity of the donor's choice. Stevens Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. To sign the online guestbook, visit stevensfuneralhome.net.

Cemetery Details

Mt. Vernon Cemetery

Highway 284
Forrest City, AR 72335

Previous Events

Memorial Service

FEB 28. 2:00 PM (CT)

First United Methodist Church
620 E. Broadway
Forrest City, AR 72335

Tribute Wall

JS

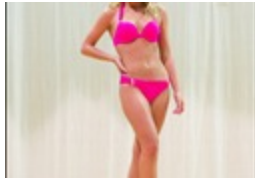
“ *My heartfelt condolences to the McCollum family during this difficult time. Cara was a shining light in our community, always full of warmth and kindness. Her memory will forever be cherished by all who knew her. May you find comfort in the love and support of friends and family. Rest in peace, dear Cara.*

- Jane Doe, with thanks to <https://obituariesbylastname.com/arkansas/> for guiding me to this tribute.

John Smith - June 11, 2024 at 11:50 PM

SA

“ *1 file added to the album New Album Name*



Sarah - March 05, 2016 at 06:43 AM

DD

“ *Diann Dennis lit a candle in memory of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum*



Diann Dennis - March 03, 2016 at 02:01 PM

RC

“ Rick and Maureen so sorry for the loss of Cara she was such a wonderful and beautiful lady praying for comfort and peace for your family. Randall and Michele Clark

Randall Clark - March 01, 2016 at 08:39 PM

VH

“ ViVi Hall lit a candle in memory of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum



ViVi Hall - February 29, 2016 at 05:54 PM

MS

“ Cara's passing is a tremendous loss for her family, boyfriend, friends and co-workers and also the viewers at SNJ-Today in Millville, New Jersey. RIP Cara.

Michael Smith - February 29, 2016 at 05:50 PM

AS

“ We are so sad to hear of your loss. My husband Jon Payne worked with Cara's grandfather George "Buck" Buckingham on the milk route in Blytheville and West Memphis for many years. We wanted to let you know that you are in our thought and prayers.

Jon and Zada Payne, Marion, AR.

Amy Sisson - February 29, 2016 at 11:33 AM

SA

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Sarah - February 28, 2016 at 09:49 PM

SA

“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



Sarah - February 28, 2016 at 09:47 PM

MS

“ We had the pleasure and privilege of getting to know Cara at SNJ Today. We went to two live news recordings at the invitation of Nick Pitman and Cara was kind, warm and patient with my son, Ethan. They became friends and on our second visit Cara went out of her way to make Ethan feel welcome.

She was a selfless and beautiful person inside and out and a wonderful role model. Ethan is heartbroken at her loss, but told me yesterday that he was so lucky to count her as a friend. Mr. and Mrs. McCollum, Robert and Keith, our hearts are aching for you. We pray that in time you will find comfort in having shared your exceptional daughter, sister and girlfriend with us and that she touched our lives so profoundly.

Ethan Silver and the Silver Family, New Jersey

Melanie Silver - February 28, 2016 at 01:08 PM

JS

“ To the McCollum Family and Keith, all though there is nothing anyone can say or do, please know Cara was well loved and respected in South Jersey. Her presence on SNJ was a breath of fresh air and I looked forward to everyday with Cara bringing the news to our local community. God Bless to Cara, the McCollum family and to Mr. Jones.

Sincerely,
A Hug/Galloway New Jersey

Joe Sullivan - February 27, 2016 at 10:11 PM

LL

“ Lynne Love lit a candle in memory of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum



Lynne Love - February 27, 2016 at 06:58 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum.



February 27, 2016 at 05:18 PM

SG

“ I never met this beautiful girl only knowing her from the pageant and media. What a bright light, outgoing, intelligent, warm, fun person she seemed to be. Many of my friends and family have been discussing this sad loss. To Cara's family and friends, I extend my deepest sympathy for the most untimely passing of a valued "Jersey Girl." May God comfort you always. Stacey G., Wenonah NJ

Stacey Grover - February 27, 2016 at 01:18 PM



“ Enduring Grace was purchased for the family of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum.



February 27, 2016 at 10:55 AM

CD

“ Rick and Maureen, you and your entire family have been in our prayers. I just cannot imagine what you are going through. My fondest memory of Cara was when we were painting murals in all of the Sunday school classrooms. Cara and some of her friends helped me so much. She was always such a sweet, polite child. I took great pride in the fact that I knew Cara when she was in the Miss America pageant. I told all of my family (and co-workers) to watch for her! The days ahead will be difficult, but I pray you find comfort in knowing this life is temporary, just a resting place, but the next is eternal. Prayers will continue. Rev. Rex and Cindy Dickey

Cindy Dickey - February 27, 2016 at 08:17 AM

RH

“ Renee Homewood lit a candle in memory of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum



Renee Homewood - February 27, 2016 at 12:29 AM

Tre Smith

“ I first met Cara in Elementary School when we both were running for Class President and ever since then we've had mutual respect for one another. She was a great person who always kept a smile on her face. I'm glad to call her one of my classmates even when she beat me in all the school competitions growing up :) You will be missed



-Dominique Smith "FCHS Class Of 2010"

Tre Smith - February 26, 2016 at 10:49 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum.



February 26, 2016 at 03:57 PM

PA

“ Sorry for the loss.

Patrick - February 26, 2016 at 03:39 PM

LW

“ I didn't know Cara personally but I remember watching her in the Miss America Pageant. I am originally from New Jersey so I always vote for Miss New Jersey. I thought she was a wonderful spirit and I thought she might indeed take home the title. My prayers to her family and Keith and Charlie. May you take some comfort in the great love I'm sure she had for you all. May you rest in peace Cara. Your light shines in heaven above I'm sure.



Sincerely,
Linda W.
Milford, PA

Linda Weidner - February 26, 2016 at 02:59 PM

DT

“ Cara was my daughter, Krystle Tomlinson's, big sister the year that she was Miss Island Resort 2013. She was always approachable, warm, friendly, and a great role model for Krystle and all young ladies. The last time we saw Cara's smiling face was at the Miss America pageant in September 2015, when she grabbed Krystle for an interview for the SNJ TV station. We love Cara, and will miss her terribly. Our sincere condolences to Cara's parents, family and close friends.

Regards,

Denise and Krystle Tomlinson and family

Denise Tomlinson - February 26, 2016 at 12:19 PM

JH

“ *My deepest sympathy to the MCollum family on the loss of your lovely daughter. She gave so much of herself while here for such a short period of time. She truly was a giving and loving woman. May God's grace help you through this difficult time.*

*Jan Hall
Franklinville, NJ*

Jan Hall - February 26, 2016 at 12:17 PM



“ *From the Bonnie Blue Foundation in New Jersey, we light a candle to the memory of Cara McCollum. Thank you for all the years you supported our foundation and for being an amazing Miss New Jersey. We will miss you and carry your spirit with us always.*



Rachel Albanese - February 26, 2016 at 10:09 AM

DA

“ *Dana(Robbins)Smith lit a candle in memory of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum*



Dana(Robbins)Smith - February 26, 2016 at 08:55 AM

DB

“ *May your family find peace and comfort in the memories you all shared with Cara. I watched Cara on SNJ, she will be greatly missed.*

*"In memory of a life so beautifully lived...a heart so deeply loved." --
Author Unknown*

*Sincerely,
Donna Burns*

Donna Burns - February 26, 2016 at 07:13 AM

AR

“ *Praying for the family, so sorry for your loss*



Alisa Randolph - February 26, 2016 at 04:04 AM

SW

“ *Thank you for representing the st of nj. May God bless you, and keep you in his loving arms.*



Susan willis - February 25, 2016 at 09:21 PM

KA

“ *Karenshields lit a candle in memory of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum*



karenshields - February 25, 2016 at 08:39 PM



“ *She made such a difference in her short life. She'll never be forgotten.*

Jean Guarr - February 25, 2016 at 04:46 PM



“ *I first met Cara at the first local that she did, Danielle and I arrived the same time that Cara did in fact we were early so we sat inside and chatted until we found out where they're putting the girls so that they could set up all their pageant gear.*



Such a genuine woman she will be missed by all, God take care of this Angel that you have gained!

Here is another story.....I remember when Danielle and I went to the Miss Philadelphia local and we talked to Cara, she told Danielle that she was not a big fan of tap dancers, but she really loved watching her dance and to have fun as she competes in the locals.

Lisa Barger - February 25, 2016 at 02:50 PM

NG

“ *My deepest condolences to Cara's family. As a newspaper reporter for the Downbeach Current, I met, interviewed and photographed her several times since she made her debut in Atlantic City at the Miss America Pageant. What a beautiful, intelligent, down-to-Earth and funny woman she was. She made me feel like we were friends forever.*
I will miss you Cara. You are a bright light that will shine in our hearts forever.

Nanette LoBiondo Galloway - February 25, 2016 at 02:48 PM



“ *Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum.*



February 25, 2016 at 12:18 PM

MS

“ *I just want you to know, somehow this will become lighter for you and you will gain peace*

melody shingle - February 25, 2016 at 11:37 AM



“ *Cara, it was an honor to know you. I was so proud of your career. You were a beautiful soul inside, and out. I wish we got to work together more, but I know you are making people even happier in heaven as an angel. We were lucky to have you on earth with us for a short time. I will continue to pray for you and your family, and Keith, an your dog.*
xoxo



Jen

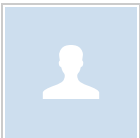
Jennifer Sherlock - February 25, 2016 at 10:54 AM



“ *Your friends and neighbors of 300 Block 7th Avenue purchased the With Distinction for the family of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum.*



Your friends and neighbors of 300 Block 7th Avenue -
February 25, 2016 at 10:01 AM



“ *Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum.*



February 25, 2016 at 07:50 AM

AP

“ *Cara, We met you once for a few hours. But the beauty and love within you radiated and was felt by all who knew you. Heaven rejoices having a new, beautiful soul and we are sad to lose such a truly good person! May you rest in peace, knowing that your memory and good deeds will never be forgotten. Our sincerest, most heartfelt condolences to Keith and your family. 🙏 Always in our prayers. Dr. & Mrs. Keith Preis*



ALEXA PREIS - February 25, 2016 at 07:36 AM



“ *Gift of Grace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum.*



February 25, 2016 at 07:03 AM

LP

“ *My condolences for the loss of such a beautiful person! I watched Cara every night on SNJ, from the beginning. I also have followed Keith's career on NBC10 from his first day on. They made the perfect couple, and to lose someone as bright and bubbly as Cara is a tremendous loss for all of us in South Jersey. May God Bless you all.....and may Cara shine on in the lives of all she has saved.*

Lisa Press - February 25, 2016 at 04:25 AM

QM

“ *May GOD bless her and her family*

Quinn Mattern - February 25, 2016 at 04:01 AM

KD

“ Dear Rick and Maureen, Keith and I were so sad to hear the terrible news. We know no words are adequate, but we will keep your family in our thoughts and prayers every day. Love Donna and Keith Goza

keith and donna - February 24, 2016 at 09:22 PM

JM

“ I got to know Cara for a few weeks when I served as her driver for the miss America pagent I knew in the short time that I was around her that she was destined for great things in her life . I was truly sadden to hear of her accident and her passing and realizing that God has greater plans for her now that she will be doing for him in her eternal life with him . I extend my condolences and my prayers to her family and loved ones in there time of grief . John mcguire

John mcguire - February 24, 2016 at 07:43 PM

BC

“ Brothers and Sisters in Christ purchased the Enc hanted Cottage for the family of Miss Cara Maureen McCollum.



Brothers and Sisters in Christ - February 24, 2016 at 06:11 PM

DG

“ My thoughts and prayers are with you during the untimely loss of you precious Cara. God give you strength, love and peace during this time. Soar High Sweet Cara!!!! Love to you all. Debbie Gilliam



Debbie Gilliam - February 24, 2016 at 04:32 PM

DG

Still sending love and prayers to the family. I know how hard it is to lose someone you love!

Debbie Gilliam - February 27, 2017 at 06:12 PM

LG

“ *My thoughts and prayers are with the family. May God comfort and keep you during this time.*

Linda Galloway-Johnson - February 24, 2016 at 03:42 PM

GI

“ *Sending condolences from New Jersey. Cara will be missed. A bright star gone too soon.*

Gina - February 24, 2016 at 03:26 PM