



Karl Scheitheid

January 27, 1962 - March 9, 2025

Karl Scheitheid (“Goofy”) was the kind of person who did not wait for others to ask for his help. Whether it was fighting for the rights of people living with AIDS or shoveling the sidewalks and driveways of his neighbors on the West Side of Buffalo, he was on the scene without hesitation.

Karl was born 63 years ago in North Tonawanda, N.Y. to Judith Wilke and Arthur Scheitheid. After infancy he was raised primarily by his grandparents in Western New York. His happiest memories of his youth were of visiting national parks across the U.S. and Canada with his grandparents. His extended family includes cousin Cheryl Freer; siblings Linda Babiak (Arcade), Robin Higgins (Grand Island), and Margaret Schotto (Vermont); as well as nieces and nephews Rebecca, Christopher, Philip, Matt, Jon, Sarah Lynn, Sarah Lou, Emily, Jill, A.J., and Amy.

After graduating from Tonawanda Senior High, where he participated in wrestling and hockey, he attended Mohawk Valley Community College near Utica, N.Y. He volunteered as a disc jockey for the school’s radio station, WRMT, before transferring to Syracuse University. There he studied arts, advertising, and design and again worked as a DJ for the college’s station. A role as director of the student-run Concert Board led to him bringing artists like Prince, David Bowie, and Bruce Springsteen to the city’s Carrier Dome.

This initial exposure to the music industry soon led to booking emerging acts into local clubs, and he was approached by RCA Records with a job in New York City. Thinking the offer was a practical joke, he initially turned it down

until he could be convinced otherwise by a label executive. He left Syracuse before graduating and found himself, in his early twenties, one of the youngest A&R (Artists & Repertory) professionals in the “spectacular” music scene of the 1980s. “It was hard for me to comprehend,” he later recalled. “I was a twenty year old kid, meeting idols that I had had all my life. I never thought I could do all that.”

Karl chose to put his own career on hold when his aging grandfather grew ill, and he returned to Tonawanda in 1985 to take care of both grandparents for the remainder of their lives. In his downtime he began spending time at the Continental, the fabled punk venue in downtown Buffalo where he found his true community. Mutual friend Claudia O’Keefe introduced him to Tony Popielinski at the club, and their relationship gradually blossomed into a partnership and marriage that lasted 35 years.

Karl’s second career was in the world of printing and graphic design. His first job in the field was at Bodoni Press, followed by lengthy spans of work over the next three decades at what was then called Kinko’s, then Net Tech Solutions, the Bee Group of community newspapers, and finally Gintzler International. At each one he added to his growing circle of lifelong friends. A solid supporter of Planned Parenthood from an early age, Karl made activism an essential part of his life in Buffalo, most notably with the Western New York chapter of ACT UP, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, from the late 1980s into the 1990s. He combined the skills of his day jobs with his work on behalf of the local queer community by co-founding many print publications, including Q News and Outcome, which kept Western New Yorkers informed about politics, culture, and health issues well before the advent of the internet.

Aside from Tony, music was the greatest love of Karl’s life. As a longtime member of the Buffalo Bears, a gay men’s social and service organization, he was a beloved DJ for monthly dance parties for years, also sharing that talent at many private and public events. Ska and punk were his personal favorites, but no genre or theme was beyond his grasp. “I couldn’t imagine my life

without music,” he said, and sharing it with others “brings me joy.”

Karl died on March 9 after a lengthy struggle with cancer, with Tony and his friends Don Kreger and Meg Knowles by his side. Final arrangements were handled by Wattengel Funeral Home. A celebration of his life will be held in the future; for details, contact tpskibear@aol.com. Donations can be sent to Gay and Lesbian Youth Services of WNY.

Tribute Wall

JB

“ *What can I say about Karl?*

He was my friend, and he was my friend for a very long time. We met when he started working for my dad, He was a very competent and careful graphic and pre-press artist. We hit it off pretty quickly, and soon started going out to some local clubs.

I lived in Niagara Falls, and it wasn't long before Karl suggested we go to The Continental, and it became a weekly thing. We danced our rear ends off, and met so many good people, including our future husbands.

There was drama, of course, since we were so young. Karl was always there for me through all of it, never judging, and always caring.

From the time he was living with his grandma, who sadly passed during our friendship, to when he moved to Buffalo, got married to Tony, bought a house... always a good friend - no, a best friend.

We shared so many times together, he touched so many lives. I am proud to have called Karl my friend.

Jeanine Bright - April 11, 2025 at 06:42 PM

RM

“ *Karl,*

A man with a heart of gold. You lived a life full of caring and giving of yourself. 💙

I have fond memories of the times we spent in youth group.

Rest peacefully and joyfully in the Glorious Presence of our Lord.



Rich Machnic - March 20, 2025 at 08:36 AM

LI

“ To my wonderful brother However great or small to have you as my brother was the greatest gift of all A special time a special place a special brother I can't replace. With an aching heart I whisper low I miss you my brother and love you so. Go be with my Son and Grandparents too I love you

Linda - March 17, 2025 at 03:34 PM

DK

“ I met Karl, and his future husband Tony, way back in 1995, shortly after starting to date my now husband, Ron Ehmke. I soon joined what would later be named the Little Debbies, our breakfast club. Karl was a regular attendee at our Saturday get-togethers when he wasn't working, and I always enjoyed his company. I held a special bond with him because he grew up in the City of Tonawanda, where I lived. Over the years, I slowly learned a lot about Karl's life, from growing up with his grandparents to the wrestling team in high school to the many diverse jobs he held as adult. He didn't make a big deal about it, but Karl was always doing something for the communities he was a part of. I wish we had more Karls in the world today.



Don Kreger - March 17, 2025 at 02:27 PM

JG

“ I’ve known Karl and Tony for about 14 years, and they were among my first friends when I moved to Buffalo. I’ve had the fun of breakfasting with them on many a Saturday morning. To know Karl was to love him, and Karl inspired the love and loyal friendship of many people (and cats). Seeing his circle of friends rally to support him through every moment of his last days was a testimony to this. Karl faced his end with remarkable directness and courage, with Tony at his side. I’ve always admired their tight bond, their enduring commitment to each other through all the challenges life has thrown in their way. Their love for each other is a beautiful thing that continues to touch everyone around them. Although Karl has left us too soon, his time on earth was well-spent. *La Lucha Continua, Brother Karl.*

jean gregorek - March 17, 2025 at 09:12 AM

BH

“ I worked with Karl for years at Bee Newspapers, and our interactions were always enjoyable and often helpful. He was the person who suggested me for a position that I'd never thought about seeking. It became my favorite job. *Beth Hutchinson*

Beth Hutchinson - March 16, 2025 at 11:40 PM

KJ

“ I had the pleasure of working with Karl at the Bee. He brought such a joyful spirit to the workplace and was always ready to help someone out. I lived in his old neighborhood at the time and we bonded over neighborhood gossip and tales of Ketchum Place. I was saddened to learn he was ill and even more saddened to learn of his death. Karl was a great guy and I feel fortunate to have known him.

Kate Jenkins - March 16, 2025 at 09:45 PM

DW

“ I always have difficulties with remembrances. Karl and I never served together in 'Nam, we never shot the rapids, never got into a tricky predicament over the Arc of the Covenant.

But for 2 decades, Karl was my friend. Karl was most pleasant company. Pleasant company is a rare and underrated virtue. I treasured it. In the 20 years I knew him, there was never a time when I didn't enjoy talking with him.

Karl was pleasant company for 20 years. But not 21. Alas. Our breakfast get-togethers have diminished.

Karl was my friend. I miss him.

Dale Wiles - March 16, 2025 at 09:10 PM

DB

“ Karl and Tony were some of the first people I met when I moved to Buffalo. Tony made beautiful videos which he showed at Squeaky Wheel's themed screenings. The last time I spoke at length with Karl was at one of Meg's garden parties. We spoke about how to deal with difficult people. It was a far-ranging conversation, and I remember thinking, "Karl is such a great person to talk to!"

Dorothea Braemer - March 16, 2025 at 06:53 PM

JL

“ The first time I remember talking to Karl was on a spring morning in front of Women's Services during the Spring of Lies. He was leaning against the building and said "Hello Jody" I was surprised he knew my name. Over the next thirty years, we became friends, more like a family. We had cottages, demos, movies, parades, thanksgiving dinners and of course breakfasts. He was a warrior. I'm heartbroken he won't be around to continue the fight.

Jody Lafond - March 16, 2025 at 06:08 PM

MS

“ My favorite memory of Karl is from when our dad had me at our grandparent’s house in North Tonawanda for a visit. Our grandfather was a taxidermist and had several projects in varying stages of completion in the basement. Karl would grab one of the “animals” and chase me around the basement with it pretending to attack me with it. He is ten years older than me so tormenting his younger “sister” was a necessity 🤪

Margaret Schotto - March 16, 2025 at 04:38 PM

DH

“ I will always be sorry that I didn’t take more opportunities to chat with Karl. The fact that I just found he spent his summers exploring national parks in the USA and Canada with his grandparents, something I did with my parents as a kid, is just another thing I wish I could chat with him about. I never left a conversation with Karl without feeling happier about our world; he truly made this life a better place to be.

David Hall - March 16, 2025 at 04:18 PM

MK

“ I met Karl when I made a short documentary about an actup demonstration in 1991. He gave a great interview while making milkshake costumes for the performative protest about nutritional supplements for people with AIDS. I remember seeing him later when he was a clinic defender, protecting women from harassment as they entered and left an abortion provider. He and Tony were always doing something for the community - whether it was creating and caring for a memorial garden for victims of AIDS, or planting trees for neighbors on their block on the west side. He was a truly compassionate man who walked the walk of his beliefs. It was such a pleasure to know him!

Meg Knowles - March 16, 2025 at 02:29 AM

PO

“ I met Karl when I started dating my husband who lived across the street from him...we all shared a liking for the same kind of music and he actually did the music at our wedding party! I remember dancing with him at the clubs when we were young...Later years we would run into him and Tony at different events like Music is art... Thursday in the square ...Continental reunion...etc...always enjoyed seeing his happy face! We will miss him and I'm so glad to have been able to know him..I feel he's dancing in heaven...Dance away Karl....

Patty Oswald - March 15, 2025 at 09:52 PM

Laura Robinson

“ Karl sat behind me in graphic arts class in high school. He was so talented and, of course, was the teachers pet. Facebook brought us back in touch. I am truly grateful to have known him. He was an amazing human.

Laura Robinson - March 15, 2025 at 06:43 PM

TR

“ Met Karl in Middle School, friends with my brother and then became one of the family. A kind gentle boy that became a man. We reunited at my Mothers funeral and he reminded me how many lives our family touched including Karl. Rest in peace Karl, you will be missed.



Terri Ryan - March 14, 2025 at 08:19 PM

BS

“Karl and Tony were amazing taking care of each other and my mom and dad until they passed away. they cooked and cleaned her apartment. doctors appointments and shopping. he was very sweet and caring. he will missed

barb schneider - March 14, 2025 at 08:03 PM

BM

“Karl could always make a boring day at work so much better. I loved the stories of his family life and of his experiences with, and love for, Tony. I miss you my friend.

Barbara Mongiovi - March 14, 2025 at 07:37 PM

EK

“Karl was always so kind and understanding to me and his legacy of activism and goodness will surely endure. May our world always be better for the beauty and joy he brought to it.

Elizabeth kelly - March 14, 2025 at 06:47 PM

SU

“Whenever Karl was DJing at OHM for Bear Nights and I would shuffle towards his booth to request sometimes silly songs

Scott Urbanski - March 14, 2025 at 06:39 PM

AB

“Karl always had a kind word and conversation for me when he saw me outside. I really appreciated that. I know he was like that with everyone - but it truly meant a lot to me. We really lucked out being next door neighbors for those years. Karl and Tony always loved on our pup Daisy - she would wait on the porch for a pet from her favorite neighbors. We will all miss you in this world Karl.

Andrea Boudreau - March 14, 2025 at 04:41 PM

RW

“Karl enlivened our wedding in 2012, our 28th anniversary. He was thoroughly professional and very patient with my quasi OCD self, insisting that the processional be perfectly timed. Donnell and I value our friendship with Karl & Tony.

Ron Weekes - March 14, 2025 at 02:17 PM

DO

“When I lived in Buffalo in the 1990s, I considered Karl one of my best friends and enjoyed Saturday brunches and wonderful thrifting trips with him and the little Debbies. During the pandemic, I loved watching and dancing along with his porch dj sessions! Karl was so kind and funny! Thank you Karl for all the wonderful experiences we shared. Sending all my best to the love of his life, Tony!

Donna - March 14, 2025 at 01:11 PM

AK

“Karl and I worked on the co-op newsletter for several years. He was gracious and kind in professional and personal manners at all times. I learned so much from him about graphic design, that I can't even recount it here. He had a great heart and beautiful soul. I will always remember his professionalism and patience. I am truly saddened by his passing.

Alan A Katerinsky - March 14, 2025 at 12:12 PM

RO

“Karl was always smiling and listening to his Celia Cruz music at work always will be in my hart I miss him so much we worked together at Gintzler

Rosita - March 14, 2025 at 11:35 AM

AH

“ I worked with Tony, but was blessed to chat with Karl when he'd come in to wait for Tony to finish his shift. Karl helped to edit my first college essays when I went back to college and was feeling uneasy with my ability to be an adult learner. He was always supportive and good for a good laugh. Many years later after I stopped working with Tony, in my new role our agency joined the Pride Parade and coincidentally our van was behind the float Karl and Tony were on and it was something with a tub and bubbles going everywhere. It was so fun watching him having a good time on the float! Karl and Tony have always been a beacon of true love and I feel like I'm a better person by knowing them both and will forever hold their story in my heart.

Alana Holm - March 14, 2025 at 11:27 AM

ES

“ Karl was always welcoming and friendly to me at my time at the bee newspapers. Was a nice smiling face to see everyday :)



Emily Sajecki - March 14, 2025 at 11:26 AM

MS

“ No matter what festival I ran into you guys, there was always a hello :) kindness!!!

Michael Sagnibene - March 14, 2025 at 11:17 AM

KJ

“ I met Karl at the Bee, and I am so happy to have worked with him for four years. He always had excellent restaurant recommendations, and was always quick with a smile or joke or music suggestion. I will always remember that on my last day at the Bee, I kept my tears in until I hugged Karl goodbye. He was the last person I said goodbye to before leaving. A true original... one of one... all who knew him are better for it. You will be missed, Karl! Fly high up there.



Kaitlin J - March 14, 2025 at 11:05 AM

TS

“ Very sadden to learn of Karl's passing. He was a very fine gentleman, and will be missed.

Timothy L. Sanford - March 14, 2025 at 11:00 AM

DH

“ Karl was a true humanitarian! Kind and loving man

David Hannah - March 14, 2025 at 10:54 AM

AP

“ Truly a great human being and the love of my life.

Anthony Popielinski - March 14, 2025 at 10:37 AM

JR

Tony, he really was. I'm so sorry for your loss.

joanna raczynska - March 18, 2025 at 09:09 AM

VL

So sorry to hear of Karl's passing. He left us way too soon, but he left the world a better place for having been here. I miss him.

VR Lehotay - March 19, 2025 at 10:41 AM