# Don Sparks

NOVEMBER 24, 2019

Our family is devastated to let you all know of the tragic death of Don Sparks. He died in his sleep late Sunday night from complications from Diabetes and Addison's disease. He was in his 58th year.

It is hard to find the words to match the character of this remarkable man. Wickedly funny, fiercely committed to his family, a gifted teacher, track and cross-country running coach, Don had an acute sense of justice and a strong moral compass. As a young adult he used to infuriate us because he was so idealistic – and worst of it was, he lived up to his ideals. He would, and did, go to the mat if he thought there was a wrong that needed righting, and won the respect of so many in the process.

He deeply loved his two children, Colin and Emily, and was so very proud of them. He dedicated himself to the very best for his students, always creative and sometimes off the wall in the ways he managed both the classes and the subject matter.

In recent years, Sherlock, a diabetes service dog, was his constant companion and running partner.

Don managed his health meticulously and until recently, was in fantastic physical condition, which makes it all the more tragic that these diseases would take him from us so soon.

Thank you to everyone who has sent messages of condolence to our family. We definitely feel surrounded and supported. Please join us as we gather to celebrate

and give thanks for this truly on-of-a-kind person.

Memorial Service will be held Friday, December 6, 2019 at 5:30pm at Chandos Pattison Auditorium, 12038 168th Street, Surrey, B.C.

You are invited to leave a personal message of condolence for the family.

## Messages of Condolence

It was our great pleasure to visit with Don and his family during his youth and watch him develop into an inspirational teacher and coach and parent. He inspired many, was loved by many and will be fondly remembered by all who knew him . Taken from us far too soon. Sincere condolences to his family from all of our family.
Rest In Peace dear Don. Yours was a life, too short but well lived.
Sincerely, Gordon & Anne Lloyd and family

**— Gordon and Anne Lloyd and family**

Our family wants to say how great of a man Don was to our son, when my son was down Don brought him aside and inspired him, after that they had a great student-teacher relationship! Our deepest condolences..

**— Bernie Antchak**

I was a colleague of Don's for many years at Walnut Grove Secondary. I was saddened to hear the news of his death. My deepest condolences go out to his family.

**— Richard Martin**

I graduated from WGSS in 2006, and had Mr. Sparks for multiple classes through grades 10-12/ He was one of the teachers who seemed to very deeply about his students and their success. He had creative and sometimes unorthodox ways of pushing us to think outside the box. My condolences to his family.

**— Hilary Matheson**

I am saddened to learn of Don's passing. It has been many years since I worked alongside Don as a colleague and friend at Walnut Grove Secondary, even so I have clear and fond memories of those times. Don was a great guy to work with. My heartfelt condolences to his family.
Gary Crocker

**— Gary Crocker**

Terribly sorry to read of Don's going on ahead. He was an honest-to-God shining light at our UBC residence, and it was a consistent joy to know him.
Words fail. Very best thoughts to Don's family.

**— Bert Ramsey**

Our deepest condolences to the Sparks family following the sudden and unexpected passing of Don. I had the privilege of working with “Sparky” during my tenure at WGSS from 1996-2000. He was a dedicated teacher, coach and all around great guy. He will be missed.
Jim Kocsis

**— Jim Kocsis**

I had the huge pleasure of working with Don at diabetic camp on Lake Cowichan in the early 80’s. Don was a constant and hilarious prankster, keeping staff and campers always laughing and wondering what was up next. He also challenged diabetic campers to step outside the perceived limits of their condition. I was very sorry to hear of Don’s passing, my love to his family.

**— Terre swan**

I was talking to my co worker today and we both happened to graduate from WGSS years apart. I was shocked and saddened to hear of his passing. I took cross country when I was in high school and I always admired Mr. Sparks for his kindness and his morality. I went through a really tough time in high school and cross country running really helped me to cope with such difficulties. I remember him always preaching to us about Terry Fox and telling us that everyone in his household had to run the Terry Fox run every year as long as they lived in the house. For some reason, I found that both funny and inspiring. I bet he is up in Heaven running with Terry. May his family find some sense of peace knowing that he inspired so many lives during his 58 years on this earth.

**— Caitlin**

I was one of Mr. Sparks' students way back in the 90s. He had a singular ability to draw students into the material. I still remember role playing the confederation conference. Helping us understand that the decisions that shape our lives were made by people just like us really instilled a sense of agency in me -- and a feeling of obligation to strive to make things different, and better, in my community. He was challenging, charming, and had a strangely acute sense of hearing. I'm sorry to hear of his passing -- I literally googled him because it has been about 20 years since I met him before heading off to graduate studies. He made time for me long after I was out of his class, and he made an impact on me and my classmates that lasts to this day. So sorry to hear of his passing.

**— Andreas (Res) Krebs**

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