



Richard Leonard Roy

November 8, 1953 - May 4, 2023

Richard Leonard Roy was born on November 8, 1953, in Westfield Massachusetts. As an adult, he had a sharp mind, a loving heart, and a strong spirit. Richard had physical disabilities that limited his mobility and his ability to speak clearly. As happened to many in his situation during the mid-twentieth century, he was placed at Belchertown State School before his fourth birthday. He spent most of his childhood and his early adult years in that institution. The profound limitations and unpleasantness of that environment had a hurtful, enduring impact on him. In spite of those years of deprivation, Richard developed into an impressive young man. He learned to read and write and do basic math. He developed other interests including movies, cars, and especially people watching. He grew into a strong-willed, adventurous, kind, thoughtful, forgiving, and engaging person. In his twenties he recruited a small group of friends and allies led by Betsy Alkins, Alan Berman, and Tim McCarthy who helped him to move out of the institution and into his own apartment. For most of the next forty years, Richard had his own place, living first in Amherst, then in Greenfield and finally in Northampton. Riding in a wheelchair, Richard built himself a life of his own as a liberated man. He explored the communities where he lived. He traveled from community to community using public transport. He spent time regularly with his friends, especially enjoying the annual gathering for his birthday. Richard became a regular at restaurants and coffee shops where everyone came to know his name, his love of coffee with lots of cream and sugar, and his warmth as a

friend. Richard passed away on May 4, 2023, after several months in the hospital. He is lovingly remembered by friends, neighbors, helpers, and others. A celebration of his life will be held in the community room at 49 Old South Street, Northampton, MA 01060 on May 19, 2023, at 2:00 PM.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAY 19. 2:00 PM (ET)

Community Room
49 Old South St.
Northampton, MA 01060

Tribute Wall

KS

“ Oh Richard I just found out you passed a few years ago. 💔 You were my first client when I began working for the Arc. What a strong willed, amazing and determined human you were. And what a joy it was to help you with your many endeavors and adventures and our endless trips to Brads place for coffee, of course! You were a beautiful soul with a wild spirit and I'll always remember you with love and affection. Keri S. 🌹

keri scheltema - November 13, 2025 at 08:40 PM

MG

“ I knew Richard for many years, and we spent many happy Saturdays at the Bluebonnet Diner. He used to stop by and visit with my dogs, who always knew that Richard would have a treat for them. My little pug would jump right into the wheelchair to sit on his lap. He came to some of my son's theater performances, and he was a great audience. He was an expert on many subjects- he knew every make of pen, and could operate all sorts of technical gadgets. He loved his independence and never seemed bitter about his situation. He was a lovely person and I will miss him very much.
Miriam Graham

Miriam Graham - May 18, 2023 at 12:45 PM

MR

“ As a brand new teacher at Belchertown State school, in 1974, I had the privilege of teaching Richard. He was an exceptional young man. He was almost 21 and hadn't had many educational opportunities until that point. Everyone who knew Richard saw his potential.

I left BSS after that year and lost track of Richard. It was wonderful to read he had a long life and the support of good advocates. His memory will be cherished by all of us who remember him.

Melinda Rigney - May 17, 2023 at 07:15 AM