



## Maria Mendia

March 5, 1953 - October 10, 2025

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Maria Mendia, 72, a beloved mother, grandmother, passionate advocate, and devoted educator, who left us peacefully on October 10, 2025. Maria was born March 5, 1953, in Wellington, Kansas, to Gregorio Lopez Mendia and Jeronima (Martin) Mendia, and lived a vibrant life marked with joy, adventure, dedication, and love for her family and community.

Maria is forever remembered by her daughter, Flute Saenz and son-in-law Jesse Saenz; her cherished grandchildren, Leo, Noel, and Olena Saenz; siblings, Alfonso Mendia, Erasmo Mendia, Humberto Mendia, and Aurora Mendia; significant other, John Tibbet; and numerous treasured nieces, nephews, and cousins. Preceded in death by her parents and dear brother, Raul Mendia.

She attended Wellington High School, and graduated with the class of 1971. She went on to earn her Master's Degree of Arts in Teaching from Rockford University in 2004. A lifelong learner and dedicated educator, Maria began teaching with Head Start then worked for the Rockford Public School District as an ESL teacher at Lathrop Elementary School. Upon retirement she continued to tutor and cheer on the success of her former students.

Maria gave generously of her time and talents to the community. She was an active community member, advocate for immigration rights and the rights of marginalized communities. She volunteered with the League of Women Voters and was an active member of Emmanuel Episcopal Church, where her faith

guided her daily life.

She was devoted to her family, especially her grandchildren, and loved spending time with them. Maria was a lady with class, she was always put together, stylish, and confident in her words. She enjoyed traveling and has visited numerous countries. She had incredible strength and an even more incredible smile. In her free time, she enjoyed swing and ballroom dancing, moving through life with grace and joy. Maria took her health seriously and her family is deeply grateful to Dr. Kim of Rockford Wellness Collective for her compassionate care.

A memorial visitation will be held on Saturday October 18th at 10:00 am, followed by a Celebration of Life at 12:00 pm at Grace Funeral & Cremation Services, 4301 N. Main St., Rockford. Memorials may be made in her memory to her family.

Share a memory or condolence at [www.graceFH.com](http://www.graceFH.com).

# Previous Events

## Memorial Visitation

OCT **18**. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Grace Funeral & Cremation Services  
4301 N. Main St.  
Rockford, IL 61103

## Celebration of Life

OCT **18**. 12:00 PM - 12:45 PM (CT)

Grace Funeral & Cremation Services  
4301 N. Main St.  
Rockford, IL 61103

# Tribute Wall



“ Grace Funeral & Cremation Services created a Webcast in memory of Maria Mendia



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**Grace Funeral & Cremation Services** - October 18, 2025 at 01:15 PM



“ Grace Funeral & Cremation Services created a Tribute Video in memory of Maria Mendia



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**Grace Funeral & Cremation Services** - October 18, 2025 at 01:15 PM

VT

“ *My sincere condolences to Flute, Jesse and grandchildren. Maria was my dearest friend/sister since we were children. We grew up poor but rich in community n family in Wellington Kansas. Maria accomplished so much in her lifetime and was always proud of her!! We were able to travel together and San Antonio was our favorite place (pic of us there) Rest in peace my dearest amiga.*



Veronica Triana - October 18, 2025 at 11:09 AM

TF

“ *The Kalamaris Family purchased the Beautiful Dreams for the family of Maria Mendia.*



The Kalamaris Family - October 17, 2025 at 05:44 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Maria Mendia.*



October 17, 2025 at 02:51 PM

JF

“ Judy and Marshall Johnson and Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Maria Mendia.

Judy and Marshall Johnson and Family - October 17, 2025 at 08:52 AM

JF

“ Judy and Marshall Johnson and Family purchased the *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* for the family of Maria Mendia.



Judy and Marshall Johnson and Family - October 17, 2025 at 08:52 AM

JT

“ John Tibbett purchased the *Lavender Reflections Spray* for the family of Maria Mendia.



John Tibbett - October 16, 2025 at 04:34 PM

JH

“ Maria didn't know how special of a friend she was to me. I knew her and learned much from her at Forest City Swing years ago and more recently when I returned to 'town,' she joyfully joined me in a Halloween themed dancing adventure in Woodstock after not connecting for many years. Maria loved everyone and instantly connected with anyone she happened to be with. I'm very surprised after seeing her in great health last year, registering voters gleefully. Maria will be a great loss to us here. God must have magnificent plans for her! 😭

Julia Heglund - October 16, 2025 at 03:07 PM

PW

“ I will miss my friend, Maria, She was a fun and vibrant spirit, who lived life to the fullest. Rest in peace.

Peggy Werner - October 15, 2025 at 05:14 PM

KH

“ My sympathies to the family. While I never met Maria in person, she was integral in recruiting church members to prepare meals for the women staying at the Overnight Cafe housed at Jubilee. We, at Second Flrst, greatly appreciated your help! She will be missed.  
Karen Hill

Karen Hill - October 14, 2025 at 10:38 PM

NH

“ Nicole Gleason and Emma Hunt purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Maria Mendia.



Nicole Gleason and Emma Hunt - October 14, 2025 at 08:26 PM

FF

“ Flygare Family purchased the Fairest of All for the family of Maria Mendia.



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**Flygare Family** - October 14, 2025 at 07:54 PM

RT

“ Rockford Dance Company team planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Maria Mendia.

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**Rockford Dance Company team** - October 14, 2025 at 12:02 AM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Maria Mendia.



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October 14, 2025 at 12:02 AM

CP

“ Maria and I attended kindergarten through fifth grade together when my family moved to Pennsylvania. We kept in touch through all these years and visited a couple times when my family came back to Wellington. She weathered some tough times with strength and grace. The world is a better place because of her. Love you and miss you Maria. C. J. Penwell

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**C. J. Penwell** - October 13, 2025 at 04:24 PM

TM

*Our bright light, Maria, has left us to join the stars in the sky. We miss you. Until we meet again sweet lady the memory of your smile and grace will be a treasure in my heart.*

Theresa Big Mountain - October 14, 2025 at 12:44 AM

MB

*Maria & I were classmates from kindergarten all through high school. We both graduated the same year & her family were neighbors next to my grandparents. We of course called her Mary back then. So sorry to hear of her passing. She was always very passionate in everything she did.*

Marcia Burden - October 17, 2025 at 10:04 PM

CB

“ On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford, we are planting a tree in her honor. Maria was a dedicated, active member of our League. She served as our first Latino Voter Outreach Coordinator. In that capacity she registered many new voters and encouraged people to get out and vote. Her determination and devotion to defending democracy was exceptional. She will be missed. Our deepest sympathies to her family and friends. We are rallying on Oct. 18th and cannot make the ceremony but I know she will be with us in spirit! Regards, Carol Bailey

Carol Bailey - October 13, 2025 at 01:49 PM

CB

“ Carol B. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Maria Mendia.

Carol B. - October 13, 2025 at 01:43 PM

PC

“ It is with great sorrow that I heard of my cousin Mary's death. As children we lived next door to each other. To her daughter, whom I met once, and all my cousins, my deepest prayers for you as you go through this painful part of life. May a perpetual light shine upon her.

*Patty Blancarte Crable*

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**Patricia Crable** - October 13, 2025 at 01:06 PM

BG

“ Maria always always had a ready smile - and a beautiful smile it still is!! She cared for Emmanuel children so beautifully and was so committed to that ministry of love. I remember her teaching a dance at a church party! So joyful. This was rather shocking news, but the memories are so lovely. Blessings to Fluet and to all the family.

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**Barrie and Alan Gibby** - October 13, 2025 at 12:52 PM