



## Richard "RJ" Ward

May 14, 1978 - January 6, 2026

Richard Jon Ward "RJ", a man with an indelible spirit an easy smile, a beloved husband and father, son, brother, cousin, nephew, grandson, uncle and friend to many, passed peacefully in his sleep at home early on the morning of January 6, 2026.

RJ was born May 14, 1978. The first son of the late Richard Ward and Linda Ward. Growing up in Libertyville, IL, RJ was an outgoing, spirited kid who, with his brothers and neighborhood friends, made his presence known. Often seen throwing a football or baseball or feverishly riding bikes down streets and alley ways. RJ was energetic, friendly, and often lovingly described as rambunctious. Together with his two brothers, rough housing became the team sport in the Ward household, often with RJ at the helm, resulting in plenty of knee punctured walls, somersaults down stairways, and bumps and bruises over the years.

RJ inherited his love for sports from his dad, and his team play started early in life with tee ball, little league and Junior High football. Just show him a field, and he wanted to play. RJ attended Libertyville High school where he excelled on the frosh/soph and Varsity football teams - always with his dedicated parents present to cheer him on. Upon graduation, RJ attended Illinois State University where he joined the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity where he added to his army of friends.

After college, RJ made his home in Chicago and worked his way up to Management at some of Chicago's most renown restaurants. It is here that he

met and fell madly in love with his wife, Jamie Grabowski. With Jamie, he met his match. She introduced him to her love of Harley's, which soon became his favorite sport. Side by side, the couple burned miles attending Harley rallies including Sturgis and Rolling to Remember in Washington DC or traversing the open road wherever it might lead.

When their son was born, RJ changed careers to spend more time with his family. Entering a sales career at ABC. They put the kickstand on their Harleys and devoted free time to raise their beloved son RJ, (aka Peanut, RJ3, Bubba, Little man). RJ quickly got busy instilling his love of sports in RJ. The duo reveled in tossing the football, baseball or kicking the soccer ball through an imaginary goal. RJ and little RJ shared an unbreakable bond and a love that was meant for a lifetime. He looked at his son with an abundance of pride, pure joy. And he would often ask "Can you believe he's, my son?" His son was his greatest love and legacy.

RJ is survived by his loving wife, Jamie and his adoring son, RJ; His devoted mother, Linda Ward; brothers; Michael Ward, and Brian Ward (Vicky); a slew of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins: and his loyal kitty, Cesca.

He was preceded in death by his father Richard (Rick) Ward; his grandparents, Ralph and Mary Sue Davis, and Herb and Mae Ward.

RJ, you will be forever missed and never forgotten.

A celebration of life will be held from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. Friday, January 16, 2026 at Burnett-Dane Funeral Home, 120 W. Park Ave. in Libertyville. In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to the family as an education fund is being established for his son, RJ. For info: 847-362-3009 or share a memory at [www.burnettdane.com](http://www.burnettdane.com).

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

JAN 16. 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Burnett-Dane Funeral Home  
120 West Park Avenue  
Libertyville, IL 60048  
(847) 362-3009

# Tribute Wall



“ *Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Richard "RJ" Ward.*



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January 14 at 12:51 PM



“ *LOVE, THE ROONEY FAMILY planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Richard "RJ" Ward.*

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**LOVE, THE ROONEY FAMILY** - January 14 at 12:51 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Richard "RJ" Ward.*



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January 14 at 12:22 AM



“ *Uncle Louie Grabowski & Terri Abrams purchased the Basket Full of Wishes for the family of Richard "RJ" Ward.*



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**Uncle Louie Grabowski & Terri Abrams** - January 13 at 05:44 PM

PS

“ RJ was an AWESOME GUY and friend! He was always willing to listen and share his time with us at ABC. He brightened every room and situation he walked into. I recall the last 5 hour phone call we had just talking about stuff. I will miss him and his smile! Sending you and your son prayers. Please let me know if I can help in anyway.

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**Paul Schuring** - January 12 at 09:30 AM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Beth Schroll Richards** - January 10 at 04:54 PM

JG

“ Jamie,

*I am so sorry for your loss, and even more sorry, selfishly, that I will be likely unable to join with you in sharing the many wonderful stories of RJ's far too brief life. I am having my knee replaced on the 14th, and doubt I will be up to traveling by the 19th. RJ and I worked together for several years at ABC, and his quiet, yet joyful spirit was infectious. He shared his love for you & RJ, and his passion to carve out more time to be active in RJ's life. Please know that I have been praying for RJ, you, and those closer to RJ after learning about his untimely passing. I can only hope and pray that you experience the palpable presence of our loving Lord during this unimagably difficult time, and that the knowledge of His presence somehow deliver you to the peace which surpasses all understanding. May God bless and keep you today and always.*

*Jim Gorski*

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**Jim Gorski** - January 10 at 02:19 PM

CD

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**Cynthia Davis** - January 10 at 11:32 AM

JP

*Still so hard to believe. Me and Rj would talk about our boys and baseball all the time. Yeah some work talk but always lead back to the boys and baseball Little RJ now has the best angel and spectator with a front row seat. Still hard to believe. Rest easy my friend. 🙏❤️🙏❤️*

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**joseph pascente** - January 10 at 07:22 PM

FS

*So many amazing memories with RJ. When i think of him only amazing thoughts of friendship and good times come to mind. His easy going personality and infectious smile is how i will always remember him! My heart hurts to know he was taken so soon. All my love to you Jaimie and little RJ. We will see you Friday....  
Frankie Bones*

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**frank spagnolo** - January 12 at 12:56 AM