

Traci Lynn Schacht, '87, passed away on September 26, 2026, in Omaha, Nebraska.



Traci Schacht, poet, activist, ardent supporter of artists and misfits, and red-headed Gemini, died Saturday, September 26, 2026, at Lakeside Hospital after a years-long battle with metastatic colon cancer.

For nearly a decade, she held space at the Harvester Artist Lofts & Gallery. If she was not working on pieces for her shows like Tumbleweeds and Ekphrastic, she was cheering on other poets, musicians, and painters. Many of those years, she was accompanied by her furry companion, the unofficial “mayor” of the Harvester Lofts, Keanu. To be a good poet, you don’t have to have stories, but it certainly helps. And Traci had a refinery of material to draw from.

Traci joked that she came into this world screaming on June 17, 1969, born to her mother Joyce Lynn Noyes and her father Richard William Schacht. Joyce would later give birth to Traci’s little sister, Staci, and little brother, Shawn. Family dynamics were not great in the Schacht household in the ’70s and ’80s. Joyce struggled with mental illness, and Traci’s father

was rarely present. At age 12, Traci was sent to her first foster home, and in 1984, she entered Boys Town. At Boys Town, Traci found friends she kept up until she took her last breath. Teachers Ms. Hansen and Mr. Horn saw to it that Traci would be prepared for college. At Nebraska Wesleyan, Traci studied theater management and English. It was at Wesleyan where Traci had a seizure while taking a shower and suffered burns on more than 80 percent of her body.

After graduating from Wesleyan in 1992, Traci went where many radical, passionate lefties go: San Francisco. While in San Francisco, she studied union organizing and worker rights. She worked tirelessly on death penalty cases and was also a guide at Alcatraz. She attended many International Socialist Organization meetings, but she said it was only to pick up cute guys. At the turn of the century, Traci returned to Lincoln. It was supposed to be a short stop before bigger horizons, but thankfully, she repeatedly postponed those plans. She continued her activism in Omaha.

In 2007, while working at Planned Parenthood, Traci was involved in a catastrophic car accident that crushed her leg. After spending months in a nursing home, she underwent a below-knee amputation. Years later, in 2013, she would undergo an above-knee amputation. While adjusting to her new life, she reconciled with her mother, Joyce. Her brother moved back to Omaha from Memphis. Needing transport to rehab facilities, she befriended a medical van driver who bonded with her over their mutual love of Bob Dylan’s album, *Love and Theft*. Talk of Dylan would later lead to talk about poetry, a world where Traci quickly felt at home. It started by going to Verbal Gumbo and hearing some of Omaha’s most passionate, vibrant poets. Then, the Omaha Healing Arts Center, where weekend poetry slams were held. In short time, Traci went from rapt attendee to participant. Traci wrote about her own experiences with trauma, body image, longing, and individuals who rarely are the subject of a poem. She also wrote about booze, smartass bad boys, and bad decisions. And because of her own gift of pulling people of all backgrounds into her orbit, she soon was rubbing elbows with Nebraska’s stand-up comic community. Traci routinely shared her gifts with others who were struggling with their own turmoils. She would travel to western Nebraska as part of her work as a teaching artist for the Nebraska Writers Collective. She used her words and her boundless empathy to help other amputees. In 2019, Traci won the Omaha Entertainment & Arts Award for Best Performance Poet. She would win more.

In 2017, Traci moved from Omaha into The Harvester. There she generated a work of published poetry as well as an accompanying show Tumbleweeds. This year, she produced Ekphrastic to a nearly packed house here. Also, this year, Traci was selected to be a speaker at this October’s TEDx. TEDx’s speakers’ announcement earlier this June came nearly four years after Traci was diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic colon cancer, the same type of cancer that killed actor Chadwick Boseman. In August 2022, she was informed the cancer had spread to her lungs. She was given between one and three years. She gave us four. Her support system, along with the artists at the Loft, included Diona Poff, who drove her to countless appointments and sat through dozens of chemo; her cousin Rodney Rahl and his husband, Timothy Schaffert; her therapist, Aaron Engelbart; Danielle de Wit and her son, Josh, who helped give Traci rides; poets and friends Zedeka Poindexter and Matt Mason; musician Aly Peeler; visual artist Tim Guthrie; Green Bay Packers rival Sean McCarthy; and longtime friend Trish Aulabaugh. These are only a portion of the people who have been in Traci’s corner since her illness. In her ever-generous way, Traci treated those who had been with her through her treatment to a dinner at Tupelo Honey to commemorate the completion of her 50th chemo. Traci loved a crowd, unless she didn’t. She loved The Cowboy Junkies, Lucinda Williams, and almost any outlaw country artists worth their salt. She hated inauthenticity. She loved good and terrible movies with equal abandon. She loved the Minnesota Vikings and the Oakland Athletics. She loved a big glass of unsweetened iced tea with extra ice. She loved Indian food and judged a restaurant’s worth by its mulligatawny soup. But she especially loved an extra-dirty Bombay Sapphire martini. A close second for Traci would be a big hug.

Traci is survived by her sister, Staci; her brother, Shawn, and his wife, Jennie; her cousins Rodney Rahl and his husband, Timothy Schaffert; Roger Rahl and his wife, Liz; Jason Schacht and his sister, Jamie; Justin Sutton; and Jade Sutton; her aunts Donna Bird and Rita Heim; her uncle Ron Schacht and his wife, Jeanette; and her fur baby, Keanu. She was preceded in death by her mother, Joyce Lynn Noyes; her father, Richard William Schacht; and her stepfather Lorenzo Noyes.