



Maria Denise Salinas

January 29, 1977 - July 2, 2025

Ms. Maria Denise Salinas of Cherry Valley, Arkansas, departed this life on Wednesday, July 2, 2025, while at UAMS Little Rock. Denise filled her life, and the lives of anyone lucky enough to have crossed her path, with joy and fierce love.

Denise was born on January 29, 1977, in St. Charles, Illinois, to Alice Morris (Smith). She was a graduate of Cross County High School, Class of 1995. Denise is preceded in death by a sister, Camilla Salinas; her maternal grandparents, Dorothy and John Benefield and Jessie Morris II, and paternal grandparents Lazzaro and Maria Salinas.

Denise was blessed with a brilliant mind and an endless passion for knowledge. She learned to read at a very early age and read everything in reach from that moment on. She was a dedicated student to her beloved WGU. On some of her hardest days she was able to find comfort and escape through her schoolwork and college community.

Denise had a personality as big as she was small. She was a loving mother, daughter, and sister. She was a friend to all, a defender to the underdog, a shoulder to lean on, a listening ear, an artist, a music lover, a talented singer, and so much more. If you met her once, she considered you a friend for life. Her love and optimism knew no bounds. It was her superpower and greatest joy to uplift those around her, making them feel safe and seen. She will be remembered fondly not only by her family and close friends, but by every waiter or cashier she made laugh or smile, by every Facebook friend and by

every child she cared for and treated like one of her own. To know her was to love her and to be loved by her.

Denise's greatest love in life was her family; especially her two "favorite humans in the whole world," daughter, Claudia Morris Blackman (Maddie), of Portland, OR, and son, Kenden Rudell Oatis, of Cherry Valley, AR; her mother, Alice Morris Smith and step-father, Ricky Smith of Cherry Valley, AR, a bonus dad, Terry Dildine of Wynne, AR, one tall sister, Teriann Turner (Robert) of Newport, AR, and one over-achieving brother, Jorge Salinas (Tara), also of Newport. Denise found much joy in being a favorite aunt to her nieces and nephew, Audrey Turner, Emmy Burton, and Lucas Salinas. She also leaves behind best friend, Cayne Orman of Beebe, AR, honorary family and lifelong friends, John and Tara Burton of Memphis, TN, a very special aunt, Edna Cotton of Hickory Ridge, AR, many other aunts, uncles, cousins and a huge host of dear friends.

A celebration of life in Denise's honor will be held Wednesday, July 9, 2025, at The Merriman in Wynne, AR, with visitation opening at 3:00 PM and a memorial service beginning at 4:00 PM. Her family invites all who have a special memory or story about Denise to share at the memorial service.

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 9. 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

The Merriman
203 Merriman Avenue
Wynne, AR 72396

Memorial services

JUL 9. 4:00 PM (CT)

The Merriman
203 Merriman Avenue
Wynne, AR 72396

Tribute Wall

EB

“ *Evan Blackman purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Maria Denise Salinas.*



Evan Blackman - July 09, 2025 at 12:13 AM

CF

“ *Curtis Witcher and family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Maria Denise Salinas.*



Curtis Witcher and family - July 08, 2025 at 10:55 PM

TF

“ *The Windsor-Cummings Family purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Maria Denise Salinas.*



The Windsor-Cummings Family - July 08, 2025 at 07:23 PM

TO

“ *The Oatis' purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Maria Denise Salinas.*



The Oatis' - July 08, 2025 at 07:17 PM

TO

“ The Oatis' planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Maria Denise Salinas.

The Oatis' - July 08, 2025 at 07:17 PM



“ Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of Maria Denise Salinas.



July 08, 2025 at 01:05 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Maria Denise Salinas.

July 08, 2025 at 01:05 AM

KH

“ Kathy Dunsworth Hunt purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Maria Denise Salinas.



Kathy Dunsworth Hunt - July 08, 2025 at 12:58 AM

KH

“ Kathy Dunsworth Hunt planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Maria Denise Salinas.

Kathy Dunsworth Hunt - July 08, 2025 at 12:58 AM

AF

“ Amanda Kaut & Family purchased the Days of Sunshine Bouquet for the family of Maria Denise Salinas.



Amanda Kaut & Family - July 08, 2025 at 12:07 AM

AF

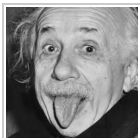
“ Amanda Kaut & Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Maria Denise Salinas.

Amanda Kaut & Family - July 08, 2025 at 12:07 AM



“ A grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Maria Denise Salinas.

July 07, 2025 at 10:24 PM



“ William Belcher lit a candle in memory of Maria Salinas



William Belcher - July 07, 2025 at 10:05 PM

WB

“ *william belcher lit a candle in memory of Maria Salinas*



william belcher - July 07, 2025 at 09:50 PM

TF

“ *The Moss Family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Maria Denise Salinas.*



The Moss Family - July 07, 2025 at 07:45 PM

WB

“ *william belcher lit a candle in memory of Maria Salinas*



william belcher - July 07, 2025 at 02:20 PM

JH

“ *My heart is broken for Denise's family. I met Denise our freshman year of college at ASU and she has been a treasured friend for 30 years. Denise was always the brightest light in the room. I could share some amazing college shananigan stories some day that I think would make Denise fall over laughing. We definately made the memories. I am sending my love to Claudia and the entire family. May her memory be a blessing. Rest in love, precious friend.*

Jason Henry - July 07, 2025 at 01:46 PM

TF

“ The woodard family purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Maria Denise Salinas.



The woodard family - July 07, 2025 at 01:23 PM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Maria Denise Salinas.



July 07, 2025 at 12:55 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Maria Denise Salinas.

July 07, 2025 at 12:55 PM

DC

“ Donna Carter lit a candle in memory of Maria Salinas



Donna Carter - July 06, 2025 at 05:06 PM

WB

“ *william belcher lit a candle in memory of Maria Salinas*



william belcher - July 06, 2025 at 04:38 PM

WB

“ *william belcher lit a candle in memory of Maria Salinas*



william belcher - July 06, 2025 at 12:49 PM



“ *I had a pair of my favorite sandals that broke, I had bought them in California boutique when I was a teenager in high school, and was bummed that I couldn't replace them. My now husband was so cute and found the same brand and a place to buy them, and we posted about it on FB and it always tickles me to think about her reaction- she said "Julie you need to marry this man so hard!" And I did:) she was just the kindest soul. The memory of this came up and I tagged her but didn't hear anything back, as she was really sick, i understand. I'm glad she was living her life off FB! We will miss her bubbly sweet infectious smile!*

Julia Kay - July 05, 2025 at 09:01 PM

CH

“ *Cathy Hamilton lit a candle in memory of Maria Salinas* ”



Cathy Hamilton - July 05, 2025 at 12:32 PM