

Michele Sumka obituary



Tifereth Israel Member Michele Sumka, wife of Howard Sumka, died on Friday, September 25, 2026, 7 Tishri 5787, at the age of 82 after a long struggle with dementia. She is also survived by her daughters Shoshanna Sumka (David Weinreich) and Rabbi Ilana Ruth Sumka (Siebrecht Vanhooren), their children Naomi Weinreich and Jacob Sumka Vanhooren, and sister Ellen (Leonard) Parker. She was predeceased by her parents Louis and Rosalie Choper Stahl.

The funeral will be at Tifereth Israel on Monday, September 28, 2026, at 10:30am. Burial will follow at Mt. Lebanon Cemetery in Adelphi, Maryland. The Zoom link for the funeral is <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82724710005>.

Due to the Sukkot holiday, the family will welcome visitors at the home of Howard Sumka, 409 Windsor Street, Silver Spring MD 20910 on Monday and Tuesday from 6-8:30pm and on Tuesday from 1-3pm. On Wednesday and Thursday, visitors will be welcome at the home of Shoshanna Sumka, 739 Thayer Avenue, Silver Spring MD 20910, from 1- 3pm and from 6-8:30pm. In addition, evening minyan will be held at 7pm each night, Monday and Tuesday at Howard's and Wednesday and Thursday at Shoshanna's. If you plan to help make the minyan, please click [HERE](#) and signup.

Michele Stahl was born on September 24, 1944, in New Brunswick, NJ and grew up in Woodbridge, NJ. She graduated from Smith College in 1966 and later that summer, she and Howard married. All her life, her primary commitments were to her family; to Judaism, especially through her service to TI; and to her career as a teacher.

In the first 11 years of their marriage, they lived successively in Chicago, Chapel Hill, NC, and Lawrence, KS. In Chicago, Michele earned a master's degree in Early Childhood Education from the Erikson Institute of Loyola University. Over her career, she directed a number of day care centers, was instrumental in creating Tifereth Israel's center in the late 80s, and was the Director of Child Development Programs at the DC JCC from 1997 to 2002. In between, she tutored early childhood education students for four years in Nairobi, Kenya.



Her husband's foreign service career (with USAID) took them to Nairobi; Sarajevo; and Tel Aviv. In all of those places, she pursued her love of and commitment to Judaism, finding community in the most unlikely places.

After returning to Washington, she immediately reengaged in TI, following her beloved Mollie Berch as the TI librarian. She also dove into the programs of Aleph, the Alliance for Jewish Renewal, enthralled with the wisdom and humanity of Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. She studied Women's Wisdom with Rabbi Nadya Gross and

wise ageing, which she taught at TI. She also completed the Aleph program as a Spiritual Director.

Perhaps her greatest pleasures in life came from watching her daughters mature into wonderful, nurturing mothers and socially committed professionals – Shoshanna in international and experiential education and Ilana as an ordained Aleph rabbi. She lived a full, adventurous, and productive life. She will be sorely missed.

May the family be comforted and her memory be a blessing. To make a contribution in memory of Michele Sumka to Aleph, click [HERE](#), or to Tifereth Israel, click [HERE](#).

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