

IN LOVING MEMORY OF KEVIN ALAN MCKELVEY
MAY 11, 1978 • JUNE 29, 2025



A Tribute to Kevin

JULY 11, 2025

Pink Pony Club,
by Chappell Roan

Mahesh Gupta and Anjali Gupta,
Nephew and Niece

Kevin loves Chappell Roan and listened to her music almost every day while making dinner.

Welcome

Lee Anne McKelvey, Sister

Reading

Supriya McKelvey, Daughter

Reading

Jim Walker, Friend

Remembrance

Joe Huser, Friend

Reading

Curtis Crisler, Friend

Elegy

Lakshmi Hasanadka, Wife

With deep sorrow, we share the passing of Kevin Alan McKelvey, who died on June 29, 2025, at the age of 47, due to injuries from a car accident.

Kevin was a devoted husband, father, brother, son, friend, writer, farmer, artist, and professor who enriched the lives of many with his unwavering dedication to the people and places he loved. A proud Hoosier, Kevin was born on May 11, 1978, and spent his life nurturing communities across Indiana and beyond.

He earned his bachelor's degree in creative writing from DePauw University in 2000 and his Master of Fine Arts (terminal degree) in poetry, editing, and publishing from Southern Illinois University in 2004. As a professor at the University of Indianapolis, Kevin inspired thousands of students through his teaching and mentorship. He was a passionate advocate for students, environmental stewardship, creative placemaking, and social practice art—endeavors he pursued with boundless energy and heart. Kevin is the founder of Etchings Press, a student-run publication. Kevin co-founded the Master of Arts in Social Practice program at UIndy, which was a graduate degree focused on using artistic practices to address social issues and engage with communities. He also established the UIndy Gardens to grow fresh vegetables on campus to address food access and scarcity in the area. Through these projects, Kevin developed strong and lasting relationships with so many students and community partners.

Kevin shared his art through numerous poetry publications, social practice art, installations, performance, and creative placemaking. Kevin embodied the power of perseverance, submitting his poems and collections for publication, researching and revising when they were rejected, and editing until he got it right. His perseverance led him to ultimately publish two books, *Dream Wilderness* (2018) and *Indiana Nocturnes*, with Curtis Crisler (2020); a chapbook *Dream Wilderness* (2011); an essay "Eight Gardens: On Gardening as Social Practice"; and 27 poems. He also shared his creative work through commissions and

public exhibitions, including an Eclipse haiku hung in 2024 in Greencastle, IN, "on garlic cheeseburger," which felt like a full circle crowning achievement.

As a young child, Kevin's family taught him to have a deep appreciation for gardening, which ignited his passion for building community through food, gardening, and farming. As an adult, Kevin used gardening as his medium for his art and to show his love for others. In partnership with various organizations, he built gardens to better his community. And at home, he created gardens to nourish his family and instill his love for the earth in his children.

While Kevin had many accomplishments through his work, his heart was truly his family. Kevin always put his family first. He spent quality time with his children, listening to them, and encouraging their passions. He cheered at show choir, played hours of Fortnite, and cast countless lines in nearby fishing holes. With his family, he shared a deep love of all things Star Wars, often engaging in deep discussions about the Force or the best lightsaber battles. He spent quality time gardening and building with his father and nurtured his relationship with his sister through daily conversations about nothing and everything. His mother and his Grandma Cauble had a profound impact on him, and he carried them in his heart through everything he did.

He is survived by his wife, Lakshmi Hasanadka, and their three children—Supriya (16), Nikhil (14), and Kiran (12); his father, Robert Alan McKelvey; his sister, Lee Anne McKelvey and nieces, Emily (3) and Natalie (2); and a wide circle of dear friends, family, students, and colleagues. Kevin was preceded in death by his mother, Sue Cauble McKelvey, and his grandparents Jack and Betty McKelvey and Lee and Margaret Cauble.

Kevin was complex and beautiful. His interests were vast and varied. Kevin's spirit lives on in every seed he planted, every student he taught, and every community he helped grow. He will be profoundly missed and forever remembered.

LEARNING TO TALK TO THE LAND

Grow up in the country
on a chip-and-seal road
where gravel will fuse
with tar after a season.
Avoid neighbors,
and if you can't,
don't have any you like
or your same age.
Learn an animal's language,
like peacocks or pigs.
Whistle at birds. Hoot.
Purr with a cat.
Take a hoe, dig
a waist-deep hold in loam.
The city won't work—
so blatant and strident
with traffic and sewers.
Mountains, oceans:
too noisy. Make sure
the sun and moon don't shine.
Dirt at night might as well
be the void of space.
The best place is flat,
where your backyard
abuts a bean field
with half-mile rows
and fence-row trees
where lightning bugs' flashes
attune your ears.
Sound carries farther.
Syllables emerge.

FRIED EGG SANDWICH

Break two brown eggs into a bowl, pepper
them with black corns crushed in a peppermill,
pour eggs in the pan so yolks center.
More pepper. Medium flame, wait until
they look sweaty, then flip the over quick,
drop the bread slice in the toaster, get plate,
ready the butter knife, wait forty ticks,
butter the toast, give the egg to its fate:
toast folded in half, yellow yolk dripping
down fingers to the plate. After a bite,
use the sandwich like a squeegee, mopping
up that yolk. Perfect after a drunk night,
I have cooked one every day for a week—
your old favorite—and will until we speak.

STANDING AND SEEING

"What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured."

—Kurt Vonnegut

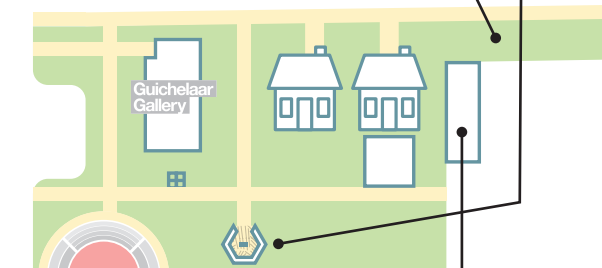
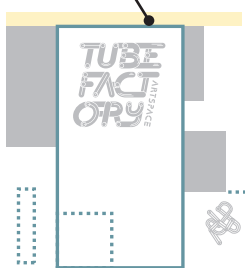
Where I grew up is so flat you could see
neighbors a mile or more away.
Now, my house is eight feet from my neighbor's.
We moved two blocks in my six-block historic neighborhood
and joke that we live in the southern, more urban part.
Whether people stand and talk in a barn lot or an alley,
the talking is what's important,
not front porches or dense blocks.
I must live urban or rural,
in between tract housing, long commutes, strip malls.
But where I live now was a subdivision
after the Civil War.

Urban density or people per square mile
have nothing to do with loneliness.
Any one of us can cloister ourselves
like a brick or granite rock in dirt.
Any place can become as insular as a cul-de-sac.
I can look through a window in my house,
through windows in the next house,
and see an apartment building two doors down.
As a kid, I could see evergreens
at my elementary school three miles away.
Proximity doesn't matter.
People can create their own cure for a place.

PERSIMMON TREES

Thirty years later, I see now
we should have planted
the saplings farther apart,
the trees tall and straight
with little spread. If we had to
pick persimmons from branches,
we'd need a ladder. But they fall
to the ground when ripe,
orange-brown and round
like an old brass doorknob.
The trees survived my teenaged mowing.
The one I mowed over the most
now has multiple trunks
my children like to climb.
I planted these trees with my dad
when I was a little older than them.
Bare-root saplings then, wrapped
in newspaper and shipped
from the state nursery.
We had so many saplings
to find a place for.
That twig-like bare-root
now twenty feet in the air.
Ripe persimmons tumble the ground.
Some are already rotted into nectar
for bees and flies. We pluck
ripe ones from the low branches
to chew and taste the sugars
of what we're picking.
We suck pulp from the big seeds
and spit them on the ground.
We fill our box with good ones
from the ground. We try not
to step on the soft ones.
Mice and possums and raccoons
will forage the ground clean
as if we never harvested anything here
and I never cupped dirt around
those bare roots and pushed the
mound flat with my hands.

Experience Kevin's place-based art here on Big Car's campus



Suggested path

1. **Starting at the entrance to Tube Factory**, visit the Indiana stones Kevin picked up, delivered to Tube Factory in his truck, and fit together by hand to create our welcoming front porch.
2. Walk east on Cruft Street to the blue planter beds outside the fence. Kevin often brought us native plants, usually pollinators for the bees. Here you'll see one Kevin shared that he had hand-labeled "Tipton Milkweed," as it came from his family's land in Tipton County.
3. Kevin was instrumental in helping install and then reinstall the *Indianapolis Bee Sanctuary* by Juan William Chávez. Moved away during construction of Terri Sisson Park, Kevin relaid — with care — the pavers that he first installed several years earlier.
4. Two summers ago, Kevin led our project with TeenWorks to build three "zen bocce courts" on our campus. These handmade spaces are peaceful, playful, and social — much like the person who made them.





In lieu of flowers,
family and friends
are welcome to
contribute to a
fund for Kevin's
three children.

*To contribute, please mail a check made
payable to Lakshmi Hasanadka, with
Memorial Fund in the memo line to:*

National Bank of Indianapolis,
4950 North Pennsylvania,
Indianapolis, IN 46205.

*Electronic contributions may be made via
Zelle: kevinmemorialfund@yahoo.com.*