



## Walt Gutierrez

October 14, 1956 - January 28, 2026

Walt Gutierrez created a lot of magic in this world. Whether you knew him as the face of Toyota of Newnan, the 2015 Coweta County Citizen of the Year, or as a playful, hardworking family man and friend, Walt leaves a legacy of generosity and love. He died January 28, 2026, at Emory Midtown Medical Center of complications from Chronic Myelomonocytic Leukemia. He was 69.

Long before a PR firm used the expression "walternative" in an ad campaign for his car dealership, Walt was known for playing by his own rules in business and in life. He was unconventional to his core, and that just might have been the secret to his success. This was a man who donated to local hospitals and dozens of causes, and quietly helped hundreds of families in need with holiday meals and groceries. He danced to Shakira in a Dancing with the Stars fundraiser for a shelter for victims of domestic violence (and won a People's Choice Award for his performance). He made joy wherever he went, and he went a lot of places.

Walt was born in Medellín, Colombia, on October 14, 1956, to the late Jaime and Sixta Otalora Gutierrez. The sixth of ten children, he stood out but got along with everyone. The family emigrated to the U.S. in the mid-sixties when Walt was 9, settling in Elmhurst, Illinois. It was a trying time for the close-knit family, and all of the siblings remain close today.

As a child, Walt was a bit of a rabble-rouser. Funny and charming, his teachers loved him, but as a class clown rather than a star student, he often found himself in trouble. Highly intelligent, he was bored, and he couldn't sit still.

Walt joined the Army at 17. After four years, he learned he had a kidney problem during his exit physical. Walt went on to have a transplant in 1986, having received a kidney from his brother. Again beating the odds, the kidney lasted 40 years.

Walt received his AA from the College of DuPage in Wheaton, Illinois. Early on, he worked as a sales representative for a business products company. He began having lunch with a beautiful receptionist named Mary, who was dazzled by Walt's blue-green eyes and his wide smile. When the branch manager reminded Walt about the company's rule against fraternization, Walt simply responded, "I quit." This bold decision to pursue the love of his life also led him to his lifelong career, as he then worked his way up in the car dealership world, from sales to finance manager to general manager, and eventually made a life-changing relocation to Georgia in 2005 to own and operate Toyota of Newnan. Walt and Mary were together for 45 years and married for 43.

They had three daughters, Victoria, Andrea, and Isabel, and he loved giving "the girls" unique experiences and exposing them to the wider world. They all cherish memories from family trips, noting Walt's enjoyment of art museums even if he didn't always "get" what he was looking at. They vividly remember the time at his friend's house in Hawaii when Walt knocked two coconuts out of a tree by throwing a perfect spiral with a conveniently football-shaped coconut he found nearby, or the time he was determined to go net fishing in Mexico. The guides stressed the difficulty and the experience it required, but characteristically, he was undeterred. He threw the net for more than an hour

until he finally caught two tiny fish. Amused by how proud he was of this feat, the resort's chef prepared and served him the fish for dinner. The girls admire how much perseverance Walt displayed throughout his life, even when at play.

As a boss, Walt had high expectations and standards. Many employees at the dealership stayed with him until he retired, and he created opportunities for families and employees to move into leadership roles. He stayed in touch with former employees through texts and birthday messages long into retirement.

After retiring in 2021, Walt and Mary were able to travel more than ever before, often with a group of close friends from their beloved neighborhood community. They went to Vietnam, South Africa, Italy, France, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. He had long espoused a work-hard, play-hard philosophy, and when the time came, he knew how to play.

Walt loved golf, travel, fishing, and sports, particularly the Chicago Bears and the Atlanta Falcons, as well as good wine and, of course, cars. He had a sweet tooth, but he was also health-conscious. In the drawer of his desk, Mary found a Post-it note: "You can never outrun a bad diet." He was a bit of a fashionista and liked to look good, always in suits during his working years, then in Lululemon, a golf cap, flip-flops, and sunglasses in his retirement.

When Walt became sick, he fought hard to the end to keep up his activities with all his favorite people. He didn't want to miss a thing.

Walt is survived by his wife, Mary Ellen Dennison Gutierrez; daughters Victoria (Nick Pierce) Gutierrez, Andrea (Bryan La Dow) Gutierrez La Dow, and Isabel Gutierrez; grandson Pierce La Dow; siblings Oscar (Sharon), Jorge (Christine), Hernan (Jayme), Jaime Jr. (Lenore), Carlos (Judy), Magda (Eric Schwartz) Wesslund, Ernesto (Heidi), Dario (Kymm), and Lilly (Bob) Bates;

and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

A celebration of life Mass will be held Saturday, May 9, at St. George Catholic Church at 11 a.m., with a reception to follow at Newnan Country Club.

Condolences may be expressed online at [www.mckoon.com](http://www.mckoon.com).

In lieu of flowers, the family respectfully requests memorial contributions to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital at [www.stjude.org](http://www.stjude.org) or to the Coweta Samaritan Clinic at <https://www.csc cares.org/>.

McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory, 770-253-4580

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

MAY 9. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

St. George Catholic Church  
771 Roscoe Rd  
Newnan, GA 30263

## Reception

MAY 9. 12:30 PM (ET)

Newnan Country Club  
1356 Highway 29 N.  
Newnan, GA 30263

# Tribute Wall

JB

“ Walt will be missed in our Community. He & Mary are a shining light to everyone. Thank you Mary for continuing his legend and staying involved in so many ways. RIP Friend.



Joy Brown Barnes - May 09 at 08:57 AM



“ Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Walt Gutierrez.



May 07 at 05:48 PM



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

May 07 at 05:48 PM



“ Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Walt Gutierrez.



May 07 at 11:20 AM



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

May 07 at 11:20 AM



“ Walt was the owner of Toyota of Newnan, where I still work. He was a very giving person to our community, and to his employees.  
He was good to me and truly cared about his Customers and others. I miss his laugh the most. We miss him here at Toyota of Newnan.



Lisa Crook - May 05 at 01:47 PM



“ Memories to Treasure was purchased for the family of Walt Gutierrez.



May 04 at 02:44 PM



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

May 04 at 02:44 PM

PB

“ God rest your Soul Walt. I suspect that you had a line waiting to welcome you Home. Up front was your Mom, Sixta. Thank you for being such a good addition to Coweta County. Pat Burns

Pat Burns - April 27 at 02:17 PM

DD

“ Danielle DeRepentigny lit a candle in memory of Walt Gutierrez



danielle deRepentigny - April 06 at 10:22 AM

SJ

“ Great friend. Great man. He will be missed.



Sunil and Jennifer - February 07 at 04:42 PM

PB

God rest Walt's soul. I suspect the Good Lord welcomed him with open arms. His Mom did too. Pat Burns

Pat Burns - April 26 at 06:37 PM

LG

“Walt was one of the kindest, most generous people I have had the privilege of knowing and working with. His recurring gifts and service, with Mary, to Coweta Samaritan Clinic and numerous other charitable organizations, have significantly enriched our community. I will miss Walt’s energetic spirit, and his friendship. Anne and I are praying for God’s peace and divine presence with Mary and the family in the midst of their loss.

*Lou Graner*

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**Lou Graner** - February 05 at 02:32 PM

JR

“The mold was certainly broken after Walt. Such a fine respected gentleman. He is a certain loss to our community and many, many friends who looked up to him. Blessings to you Mary and the family.  
*John and Denise Reidlebach*

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**John Joseph Reidelbach** - February 04 at 03:49 PM

EL

“Thank you, Walt, for being a great supporter of your community and a friend. I enjoyed the sit-down, coffee, and just having lunch with Adam and me. Thank you and Mary for all the breakfast you provided for your 1st. Responders and support. You will be missed my friend.

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**Edward Lee** - February 04 at 01:38 PM

SF

“ *Stellmach family purchased the Simply Elegant S pathiphyllum for the family of Walt Gutierrez.*



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**Stellmach family** - February 04 at 12:48 PM

SF

“ *Stellmach family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Walt Gutierrez.*

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**Stellmach family** - February 04 at 12:48 PM



“ *The Starmanns are sending our love to you Mary Ellen, Tori, Andie, Isa and extended family. Walt was a great guy and we were blessed to have him in our lives. What a force of life he was. He will be missed, and cherished in our memories forever! He also had a really great birthdate. :). All our love, Cathy, George and Ellen Starmann*

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**Ellen Starmann** - February 03 at 01:48 PM

BB

“ *The Good Lord didn't put a finer man on Earth than Walt. You will be sorely missed our friend.*

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**Bob Blackburn** - February 03 at 08:26 AM

JC

“ We were stunned to hear of Walt's passing. He was such a nice, caring man, always a smile on his face. We would run into your family at St. George over the years and Walt always had a kind word. Our condolences to your family, and prayers for your comfort at this difficult time. José and Susie Couvillion

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**José and Susie Couvillion** - February 03 at 06:55 AM

CN

“ Mary and family -

*So sorry to hear of Walt's passing.*

*This community has lost a great one. Walt's presence and generosity to this community will never be forgotten.*

*Our shared laughs always brought a smile to my face. I still laugh about the time I was buying a car and he had gone outside to look at the car I was trading in(I was pretty insistent about what I was going to pay so the salesman had to call in the big dog :) ). When he came back in, he said, "Carolyn you are getting a great deal and you better send some customers my way".... We both shared a laugh about that. I would also see him from time to time when I was getting my car serviced and there was never a time when he didn't stop whatever he was doing, say hello and chat for a minute.*

*My memories of Walt are few as compared to many but I know he made an impact on me and so many others in his life.*

*Rest Well Walt! Job well done!*

*Carolyn Newby*

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**Carolyn Newby** - February 03 at 06:22 AM

AG

“ *Walt was a very good friend, he was someone you could go and talk to. He will be missed.R.I.P my friend.*

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**Adam Griffith** - February 03 at 05:56 AM

LC

“ *The Crane family is so sad to hear about Walt. He was so full of life and was so kind . We have had the pleasure to be around him over the last few years , and he was always smiling and had a light about him that you just couldn't miss .*



*Our condolences to Mary and family . We have you in on thoughts and prayers*

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**Lisa Crane** - February 02 at 11:28 PM

KK

*So very sorry. to hear of the loss of Walt. Prayers for the family.  
Karen and Steve Kurtz*

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**Kurtz Karen** - February 04 at 03:16 PM

KK

*We are sorry and saddened to hear about Walt. Prayers for peace for the family 🙏*

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**Kurtz Karen** - February 04 at 03:17 PM

MY

“ *Walt was a good friend and a true supporter of our community. He will be missed. Prayers to Mary Ellen and Family. Retired Sheriff Mike and Bev Yeager*

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**Mike&Bev Yeager** - February 02 at 10:05 PM

LB

“ *Lourdes Brandenberger lit a candle in memory of Walt Gutierrez*



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**Lourdes Brandenberger** - February 02 at 06:18 PM

AK

“ *The Kelleher Family is sorry to hear about Walt. He was a kind, generous & wonderful friend. His generosity has had a lasting impact on so many lives at Newnan High School as he supported so many sports etc over the years. Walt was a true blessing & we will never forget his thoughtfulness. We are praying for Mary & his daughters.*

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**Alison Kelleher** - February 02 at 05:21 PM

LW

*Walt was a friend to all and especially supportive of me and my family. We are praying for all the family.*

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**Lenn C Wood** - February 02 at 05:57 PM

LY

“ *Lynn Yeager lit a candle in memory of Walt Gutierrez*



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**Lynn Yeager** - February 02 at 04:25 PM

DB

“ Dear Mary, Tori, Andie, and Isa, I am so very sorry for your loss... Walt was larger than life and such a fun person to be around! We have so many wonderful memories on Sable Oaks Drive with Walt and the Gutierrez gang and will always cherish those memories. Backyard and basement parties and just talking out front of the houses. So happy he went on to be such an amazing success in Newnan. We always missed you here in Naperville! Praying for you all and sending hugs and love your way! Love, Darlene

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**Darlene Bender** - February 02 at 04:04 PM

KW

“ Walt, I talk about you to this day ; how great of a leader you were to the moments that were hard and you told me to just keep pushing and just keep selling cars. You are by far the best leader that Newnan ever had; until we meet again .



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**Kristen Wycoff** - February 02 at 03:56 PM

PC

“ Walt was an awesome brother in law. He will always be thought of with the highest admiration. Walt was one of a kind and left us too soon. He would have been a great grandfather! Patti❤️

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**Patti Christian** - February 02 at 01:57 PM

CA

“ Cathy Houston Adams lit a candle in memory of Walt Gutierrez



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**Cathy Houston Adams** - February 02 at 01:38 PM

ST

“ *Such a wonderful caring man. I will forever miss our little chats behind the chair. Our lives have all been enriched for knowing this amazing human being. Love to Mary and family xxx*

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**sharon Tranter** - February 02 at 01:23 PM

JB

“ *Walt was a good man. Our community will be forever grateful for his generosity. He blessed so many people. I will miss seeing him at our annual NPD events. The first time we met was at a golf tournament. I offered him a water and he offered me his cigar, lol! Such a character.*

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**Jada Blankenship** - February 02 at 11:08 AM

SC

“ *His is a life that will be missed by many. Walt was a good man and I was honored to have known him. Words can't express the sadness we all feel.  
Love to the family,  
The Colonna's.*

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**Susan Colonna** - February 02 at 10:20 AM

LC

*Walt, was a very giving person, to his community, and his employees at Toyota of Newnan.  
He had a laugh like no other,  
You could hear him in another room. Always made me laugh when I heard him. I surely will miss him as a boss and a friend. ❤️  
Lisa Crook*

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**Lisa Crook** - February 02 at 10:30 AM

CA

*I enjoyed his friendship through the years and I will greatly miss him.*

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**Cathy Houston Adams** - February 02 at 01:39 PM

PL

*Walt was a gift to those who knew him. He will be missed by many. My heart hurts for Mary and family.*

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**Peggie Lawson** - February 02 at 02:42 PM

BN

*Many of us knew Walt through his many years as the owner of the Newnan Toyota dealership where he made "Walternative" a household word. His presence and charisma extended beyond his business, making him a recognizable figure throughout the community.*

*Our first encounter with Walt was at the Coweta Club in Arbor Springs. From the moment we met him, we recognized that Walt had a remarkable ability to make anyone feel as though they had been friends for a lifetime. Over the years, through countless gatherings—be it parties, trips, dinners, golf outings, or sailing adventures—Walt became more than a friend; he became family.*

*As I reflect on Walt's life, I find it difficult to capture his essence in words. I keep returning to the simple truth: "Walt was Walt." For those fortunate enough to have known him, this phrase says it all. He was larger than life—giving, exceptional, generous, funny, and truly one of a kind. His absence leaves a void that cannot be filled, and his memory will be cherished always.*

*Our hearts are with Mary, the girls and the rest of the Gutierrez family.*

*Barbara and Jim Nelan*

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**Barbara Nelan** - February 02 at 05:43 PM

MH

*I remember right after the Toyota of Newnan location was built and I believe the year 2007, Walt contacted me and ask if I could bring up my 22 1/2 foot Ebbtide Cabin Cruiser boat that I owned. He wanted potential Toyota Tundra customers to pull my boat down the Interstate to demonstrate how my pulling power the Tundra had. He said he sold quite a few new Toyota Tundra's with me allowing his customers to demo the Tundra .He was a great asset to Newnan Georgia and I am sorry to hear of his passing. My condolences to all the family.*

*Mark Henson*

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**Mark Henson** - February 04 at 07:20 AM

PC

*It is with heartfelt sadness to hear of Walt's passing. He and my late husband, Glenn, were friends thru the church and car deals. I remember most of all of a grown business man who came to Mass and kissed his mother but also kissed his father. It takes a special person to do that and it was one of the most endearing things I will always remember about Walt.*

*My love and prayers go out to his wife and daughters and the rest of the family. Know that he was a good and loving man and may you always find peace in that.*

*Sincerely,  
Pat Cogar*

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**Patricia Cogar** - February 07 at 11:42 AM

MK

*Walt was truly a compassionate and generous soul, always finding ways to help those in need and make a difference in his community. His kindness and selflessness touched so many lives. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him.*

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**Muhammad Z Khan** - March 09 at 04:31 AM