



Kirk Robb Emerson

October 8, 1959 - December 8, 2025

Kirk Emerson, 65, passed away unexpectedly, leaving a deep and lasting absence in the lives of his family, friends, and the Holland community he so deeply impacted. A teacher, coach, father, and proud Papa, Kirk had a way of leaving his mark wherever he went.

A deeply respected member of the Holland community, Kirk spent many years shaping young lives as a teacher and coach. To countless students and athletes, he was a mentor — someone who challenged, encouraged, and believed in them. To colleagues and friends, he was thoughtful, creative, and genuine. And to anyone lucky enough to spend time with him socially, he was known for his humor, his presence, and his undeniable ability to turn any gathering into a good party.

Kirk was as real as they come. He never beat around the bush, always said what he meant, and was famously stubborn. Yet it was precisely this honesty and resolve that made him so respected and trusted. He stood up for what was right and was a fierce advocate for those who could not protect themselves.

Along with earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Radio-Television Broadcasting, Kirk had a passion for art, film, music, literature, and sports. These passions led him to a career spanning more than 20 years in education. He served as a high school English and Film teacher and soccer

coach at both Roosevelt High School in East Los Angeles and Holland High School. He founded the girls' Varsity Soccer program at Roosevelt and helped establish the ESL program at Holland High — lasting contributions that reflected his belief in opportunity, inclusion, and education for all.

A lifelong fan of The Ohio State Buckeyes, Kirk wore that loyalty proudly. Fall Saturdays mattered. The Buckeyes mattered. And if Kirk were here to say one last thing, it would be simple and unmistakable: Beat Michigan.

Above all, Kirk was a devoted father and grandfather. He is survived by his children Chris, Ryan (Sheyra), and Lauren (Brad); his daughter-in-law, Lilah; and his cherished grandchildren Stella, Kalin, Adaline, Rylee, Eliah, and McKenzie — each of whom brought him immense pride and joy.

He is also survived by his brothers Michael (Linda) and Derek (Mary-Ann), along with extended family, lifelong friends, former students, athletes, and an entire community who will miss him deeply.

Kirk was preceded in death by his parents and step-parents, his beloved son Marc, his wife Karen, and his nephew Oliver.

Kirk will be remembered for his heart, his humor, his honesty, his hard-earned wisdom, and the lasting impact he had on everyone who knew him.

In true Kirk fashion, his wishes were never for a traditional service, but instead for a party — a celebration of life filled with stories, music, and laughter — which will be held at Skiles (Holland, MI) on January 5 at 5:00 p.m.

The following poem, “The Winning Tree,” was written by Kirk and reflects his lifelong love for The Ohio State Buckeyes — matched only by his disdain for the Wolverines.

The Winning Tree
Written by Kirk Emerson

At the tree of winning
The Wolverine is trying to make a home
But the Buckeyes on the tree
Won't leave him alone.

They're falling on his head
He's trying to get away,
But there is no escape
From the Mighty Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes is the mighty one
For he is King in the fall.
His Buckeyes are so super
And he is head of them all.

He is the No. 1 boss
And always will be,
For nobody can knock him off
The Winning Tree

Many have tried,
And many have failed.
When will nature quit?
Nobody can tell.

Here comes the wind
Which brings many a foe.

Trying to get on the top limb,
Where the Buckeyes are in a row.

The Buckeyes don't budge, not a bit.
The hopeless enemy, will have to quit.
They're weary and very beat,
And will have to retreat.

This story is repeated
Over and over once again.
Because nobody can beat
The Buckeyes power regiment.

Once more the Fall season is done.
The Wolverine is out in the cold.
For nobody can beat Mr. Hayes,
Not even Mr. Bo.

The story is all done
As you can see.
But Mr. Hayes will always remain,
On The Winning Tree.

Previous Events

Celebration

JAN 5. 5:00 PM (ET)

Skiles

154 East 8th Street

Holland, MI 49423

Tribute Wall

SM

“ Dear Ryan and Lauren,
I was so very sorry to learn of your Dad's sudden passing and so sorry I could not attend the memorial as we were in Wisconsin. Your Dad was a genuine friend. He used my classroom a couple of semesters during my planning period and would erase/change assignments I had written on the board or prank my room in some other way. My pranks were never as good as his but he kept things fun. He always took the time to chat. I will keep you in my prayers and am so very sorry to have missed you. ❤️

Susan Miller - January 07 at 11:54 AM

PF

“ Sending light, love, encouragement and condolences to Kirk's entire loving family.

The Fabiano Family of Holland Peanut Store

Paula Fabiano - December 31, 2025 at 12:37 AM



“ My dear friend, I value the time we had when you came back to Holland. Knew you since age 4. Thank you for the laughs, the help you gave, and the love you showed for others. I'm glad you no longer suffer. I'll never be able to fill that void that exists now, but I'll never cheer for Cleveland OR Ohio State! Rest easy, because you now have the best seat in the house to root for your beloved Buckeyes. Love ya, my brother.

Paul Blain - December 26, 2025 at 08:12 PM

KL

“ *Mr. Emerson (or Professor Kirk, as we called him) will be deeply missed. Thanks for lending us all of those classic films junior year, Professor. Sending love to the entire Emerson family.*

Katie Leighton-Colburn - December 19, 2025 at 12:29 PM

PR

“ *Kirk’s love and support showed up at nearly every baseball game, no matter the weather or the schedule. Rain or shine, freezing cold or blazing heat, early mornings, late nights, long weekends, and even miles of travel, he was there. He cheered not only for his grandson Kalin, but for every boy on the team, and that meant so much to all of us. We were incredibly lucky to have him there so faithfully. We know he’ll continue watching and cheering from above, now as Kalin’s very own “angel in the outfield.” We will miss you dearly, Papa Kirk. 💙*



Patty Ramirez - December 17, 2025 at 08:01 PM

JK

“ *I remember when our Son died Kirk wore an arm band in memory of Mitch at the next softball game. That really touched me. Kirk was such a thoughtful person*

Joyce Kuipers - December 17, 2025 at 04:57 PM

RA

“ One of my core high school memories is with Coach Emerson. I'll never forget the disappoint in his face and how upset he was when I told him I can no longer do soccer my junior year because I was pregnant . But when I returned my senior year he was the most happy and excited teacher to find out my babygirl was born on his birthday lol. October 8, 2013. He was the best . Praying for the family. Sorry for your loss

Rachelea - December 17, 2025 at 10:56 AM