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Ruth Yellowhawk, former WYSO radio personality, dies from cancer

By [Mary McCarty](#), Staff Writer

1:02 PM Monday, August 9, 2010

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Rapid City, S.D. — Former WYSO radio personality Ruth Yellowhawk died Saturday morning at her home in the Black Hills of South Dakota, with her husband Jim and family members by her side. Yellowhawk, 50, worked as program director and on-air personality from 1984 to 1996. A non-smoker, she was diagnosed with metastatic lung cancer in June.

Close friend Betty Knighton said, "Ruth spent her last few days in the glass-walled living room of their home where she had a panoramic view of the bluest of skies and the towering evergreens on the slopes outside her door. Each evening Jim sat beside her and read the cards that came in the day's mail. Every day brought messages from many of you, and Jim gave voice to each of your loving words."

Yellowhawk and her family moved to South Dakota in 1996, embracing a lifestyle closer to their Native American roots, but in an interview with the Dayton Daily News in July she said she has always kept Dayton close to her heart. "The Dayton community is swelling around me," Yellowhawk said. "I'm a bit taken aback by it, and humbled by it. I still feel very much a part of Dayton."

Bob Daley of the Kettering Foundation said that Yellowhawk, who worked closely with the National Issues Forum for 20 years, will be deeply missed. "She was a pioneer in the field of public deliberations in radio," Daley said. "She was a lovely woman and a delight to work with."

Her friends in the Dayton community have rallied behind her, helping to raise funds to pay for her medical bills. Like many in the Native American community, Yellowhawk was uninsured. In addition to her husband Jim, a well-known Native American artist, Yellowhawk is survived by her 16-year-old son Jim.

Donations can be made to the Ruth Yellowhawk Donation Fund, 23213 Black Forest Place Rapid City, SD 57702.

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