

Ottumwa Flying Service co-founder was a trailblazer, son says

OTTUMWA, Iowa — Family and friends will gather this weekend to remember longtime Ottumwa businessman Steven Black.

Black, 57, became unexpectedly ill and passed away April 17. Funeral arrangements were put on hold for two months due to COVID-19.

"It's very stressful on families as well because if you lose a loved one it takes a toll on you because you can't find any closure," said Black's son, Schuyler.

Family and friends will finally get that much-needed closure at Ottumwa Regional Airport this weekend.

Black was a long-serving member of Ottumwa's aviation community. He and his father, Arnold founded and operated the Ottumwa Flying Service at Ottumwa Regional Airport for 32 years.

"He gave everything that he could to that airport and that community and he always believed in Ottumwa," Schuyler Black said.

Black went on to begin the flight school and aviation department at Indian Hills Community College. He wore many hats—formerly serving as president of the Ottumwa Economic Development Corporation and as a board member with the Wapello County Historical Society.

Mr. Black is well known for his contributions to the community—but he's also remembered for his generosity.

A local family will be eternally grateful to Black for the difference he made in their lives.

In the late 1990s Makenzie Jo Lee was diagnosed with liver cancer at 4 years old. She received treatment in Houston until her cancer turned terminal.

"...and he picked them up and brought them home so they could at least spend their last days with their family," Black said.

A celebration of life for Black will be held from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. this Saturday at the Ottumwa Regional Airport at the Winbco Tank Corporate Hangar.