"I can’t remember a day that Sister Anna Margaret was not upbeat, positive, funny and encouraging — not just to me, but to everyone. She was a model to me of what holiness ought to be — real, full of life, with some mischief. She spread God’s love by her spirit, her words, her talents and her generosity."

A former Ursuline employee sent these words of condolence to the College when he learned of Sister Anna Margaret’s death. Many alumnae and friends of Ursuline posted personal tributes to Sister on the College’s website. Several words and phrases appeared over and over in these messages: her smile, her sense of humor, her warmth and welcoming spirit, her kindness, gentleness and caring attitude.

Kind, caring, warm and gentle are words that certainly characterized Sister Anna Margaret Gilbride, O.S.U. ’56SJ and her ministry at Ursuline College for forty years. She came to the College as the dean of students, became vice-president for student affairs, assistant to the president and author of the College’s history. To each of these positions she brought her kind and caring disposition, her warm and inviting smile and her welcoming spirit. Her office was next to the Mullen Building lobby and she was often the first person visitors met.

In the last few months several people commented how she welcomed them in that lobby and put them at ease with her sense of humor. One prospective employee wrote that she was sitting in the lobby waiting to be called in for an interview. She noted that she was quite nervous until Sister Anna Margaret came out of her office and greeted her. Years later she remembered how Sister commented that she liked her shirt and how relaxed and at ease she felt after Sister’s brief conversation.

She also eased the pain of those in the College community that had lost loved ones. Sister attended wakes and funerals of alumns, their families and friends of Ursuline College. As she wore her veil, she was instantly recognized, but it was her quiet and gentle presence and her promise of prayers that brought relief and solace to so many of them at their time of loss and grief.

One example of how dear she was involved her concern for her fellow Ursuline Sisters. People would give her little stuffed toys and each time one of the sisters came home from the hospital, Sister Anna Margaret would bring one of these toys to the sister’s room. It was her way of showing how much she cared for them.

A project that she took on in her last years at Ursuline was the College’s history. No one else was more suited to take on the task because Sister Anna Margaret personalized the College’s mission, vision and values so much so, that her name became synonymous with the word Ursuline. Completing this labor of love was her major focus. She worked on it for sixteen years carefully researching every phase of the life of Ursuline College over its 140 years and its five different locations. She wrote the history as she lived her life, seeking out only what was positive, good and beautiful in the people and the events, which shaped Ursuline. The book, which she completed only two months before her death, is being prepared for publication and will be available in a few months.

In her later years, along with writing the College’s history and being present at countless wakes and funerals, she made sure that she was present at a myriad of activities and events in the life of the College. Whether it was a President’s Tea for students who had high academic achievements, a bake sale for a student organization or the retirement reception for a faculty or staff member, Sister was present with her smiling support and encouragement.

Many people attended her wake and funeral. They included present and former faculty and staff members, members of the Board of Trustees, alumnae, a waitress from a restaurant that Sister frequented, Ursuline Sisters and former Ursuline Sisters whom she guided during their formation years and people who Sister taught in grade school so many years ago. Every one of them had their own memories of how Sister Anna Margaret had touched their lives. They were there because Sister had made a difference in their lives and they often described that difference in terms of her kindness and gentleness. The comment of one woman describes the feelings of many individuals that knew Sister. “I was a better person for having known her.”

In honor of Sr. Anna Margaret, the College has set up the Sister Anna Margaret Random Acts of Kindness Scholarship Fund. Faculty and staff members of the College can call attention to students they see going out of their way to assist College visitors or members of the Ursuline community. This program best honors Sister who was particularly known for her kindness and gentle spirit. If you would like to make a contribution to this fund, to continue Sr. Anna Margaret’s legacy, please visit www.ursuline.edu/news/sister_anna_margaret.

In addition, the lobby in Mullen near Sr. Anna Margaret’s office and also a place where she spent much of her time making visitors of the College feel welcome, will be named the Sr. Anna Margaret Gilbride Lobby.

Patrick Riley, Ph.D. MA ’85
Director of Development

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We Mourn Our Gentle Woman

9