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Warming Center suffers a tremendous loss with the death of Kathy McKinley-Goodrich

By Gina Joseph gjoseph@medianewsgroup.com; @ginaljoseph on Twitter
Jan 15, 2020



Shown here at the Macomb County Warming Center is the late Kathy McKinley-Goodrich, executive director and founder of the organization that provides shelter and services to the homeless, died unexpectedly at her home on Monday, Jan. 13. GINA JOSEPH - THE MACOMB DAILY

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The last time Dan Heaton spoke to Kathy McKinley-Goodrich of Eastpointe, co-founder and executive director of the Macomb County Warming Center, was at the homeless shelter. When they spoke Sunday night, she had some fresh ideas for fundraising.

The following day, she died unexpectedly at her home. She was 80.

"I think the best honor I can pay to Kathy is to let her know that on Monday night - a few hours after she entered heaven -- 75 homeless men and women had a safe place to sleep and were given a hot meal," said Heaton, communications manager for the Macomb County Public Works Office and among those who worked with Goodrich, and supported her mission to help the homeless. Kathy was a true servant leader. I had the great honor to serve with her as a member of the Macomb County Warming Center board of directors and a volunteer in our shelter program.

"From Kathy, I learned how best to work together to serve some of the most vulnerable members of our community. In every action, in every decision she made, she worked to put the dignity of our homeless clients first. I learned so much from her over the years -- it is hard to put it into words. Our community is better because of her tireless work over many, many years."

Funeral services for McKinley-Goodrich, being held at St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church in St. Clair Shores, are likely to be attended by a host of family members, community leaders, pastors, volunteers, friends and victors - the downhearted living on the streets for whatever reason who were given a hand up by a kind and gentle woman who worked tirelessly to provide the a safe, warm place to spend the night.

"Many of us see the homeless and are moved to say a prayer or offer help in some small way but she springs into action," said Joe Sowerby, realtor and partner in Anton, Sowerby & Associates in Mount Clemens who, along with his wife Kata, started "The Warmth of Music."

The fundraiser for the Warming Center (coming up in March) was organized by the couple after the center lost \$40,000 in state and federal funds. Sowerby's mother and Goodrich were also good friends who worked together to start the Warming Center in 1999, after police discovered the body of a man who burned to death in the bottom of a Dumpster.

No one should suffer and die that way and for most of her life, Goodrich sought to ensure that would never happen again.



Just before Christmas, Kathy McKinley-Goodrich was interviewed by The Macomb Daily for a story about the homeless shelter's need for volunteer fundraisers. GINA JOSEPH - THE MACOMB DAILY

Since the program and its partner churches began, thousands of individuals who do not qualify for traditional shelter services have been provided with a safe, warm place to spend the night along with a simple but nourishing evening and breakfast meal. On nights when Goodrich happened to stop by a church to make sure Warming Center volunteers and workers had what they needed, guests would also find a shoulder to cry on and a friend who wanted nothing more than the best for them.

Its Day Center, which provides additional services such as help in job hunting and resumes, was home base for Goodrich.

At any time during business hours one could find her there: helping a homeless person fill out a job application or figuring out a way to get them to a job they did manage to get. She held the title of executive director but never flaunted it for vanity sake or insisted that she was the reason the Warming Center existed. In her case it served as a beacon for those in need of compassion and charity given without question or judgement and for those who wished to join her crusade.

Every year, McKinley-Goodrich would invite are churches to host the shelter program for a week during the winter months, November through March. Over the years - there were several fall seasons where she feared there wouldn't be enough churches to cover all of the weeks including Thanksgiving and Christmas.

But she would pray.

"She had a strong faith in God and she would put that faith to practice," Sowerby said.



A file photo shows Kathy McKinley-Goodrich chatting with a guest of Macomb County's Warming Center. GINA JOSEPH - THE MACOMB DAILY

And then before a panic call would need to be made, she would hear from a parish volunteering time and space.

"Our community has lost a powerful, kind, selfless advocate of the poor and homeless. It is heartbreaking to lose such a wonderful human," said Sowerby. "The world is a lesser place - but heaven gained a low key, unassuming beautiful angel."

Heaton added the Warming Center's board of directors are committed to ensuring that her legacy continues.

FYI

McKinley-Goodrich and her husband, Kevin, were married for 30 years. She was also the loving mother of Mark (Deana) Henderson and Helene (Jerome) Henderson. She is also survived by her: granddaughter, Olivia; sister-in-law, Carole; nephew, Clayton (Norma) McKinley; niece, Sheila (Wayne) Rouse and great nephew, Josh.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Jan. 25 at St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church at 21201 East 13 Mile Road in St. Clair Shores.

Visitation: Saturday, from 9 to 10 a.m.

Services: Saturday, at 10 a.m.

Final resting place: Forest Lawn Cemetery at 11851 Van Dyke, Detroit.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Michigan Humane Society, 30300 Telegraph Road, Suite 220, Bingham Farms, MI 48025.

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