KATHLEEN RULKA, MS, LMFY, CPE
by Eileen Kelz

When Kathleen Rulka moved to Marshfield in 2007 to marry Brian Ewert, she brought with her a wealth of talents and passions that would soon benefit the Marshfield Community. As part of the transition to Marshfield, she retired from her profession as a Marriage and Family Therapist and interfaith chaplain at an Eau Claire hospital. The focus of her work had been as an end-of-life counselor in palliative and hospice care. Upon moving, she didn't skip a beat with her involvement and commitment to her community. Alongside her professional calling, her other passion has been involvement with the arts.

To Kathleen, the arts is so much more than watching or experiencing something fascinating or beautiful, it is a way of bringing the community together in meaningful ways. Kathleen is a talented potter and sculptor and has her own in-home studio, Egnace Ceramic & Glass Studio. She has a sculpture in a permanent exhibit at the Lucille Tack Center for the Arts. She has also promoted community art by serving on boards with art organizations in Marshfield. What Kathleen finds most fulfilling is to donate her time and talent to local charities to strengthen our community.

Through her artistic and organizing skills she collaborated with Tim Bergelin, Peter Dyke and Chris Egger to bring a potters' studio to Chestnut Avenue Center for the Arts. She and Bergelin also collaborate in creating bowls for the annual Empty Bowls event to feed the hungry. They bring together the talents of high school students, local teachers, and the community at large. They have held pop up studios and other community events to involve those of varying levels of experience.

In addition, Kathleen contributed her artistic talents to creating goblets for the annual Madrigal Dinner at Spencer School District. In 2017, three weeks before the event it was discovered the box of goblets had dropped and all but one goblet was destroyed. Kathleen created a full set of replacement goblets in time for the dinner. She also created 200 communion chalices for Wesley United Methodist Church for the re-opening ceremony of the new church after the old building burned down.

Her most publicly visible project is the incredible Tribute Wall in the atrium of the Everett Roehl Marshfield Public Library. For this formidable project she designed tribute tiles to recognize donations totaling $170,000. Under her skilled guidance, collaborating with a tile setter, contractor and volunteers she saw the tribute successfully completed and installed.



Kathleen Rulka

Just for fun, Kathleen organized yarn bombings around Marshfield with a group of creative women. This included gathering a multitude of afghans crocheted by the late Margaret Peterson, to dress the Clyde Wynia Dragon on Veterans Parkway.!

Kathleen's generosity extends well beyond the arts. She and her husband worked to raise funds to help pay off the mortgage of the Personal Development Center Orenda Center so that the hundreds of families served by this organization could be guaranteed shelter. They generously matched the funds that they raised. In addition, every December they work to close the gap of sponsors for the United Way Nutrition on Weekends program to alleviate food insecurity for area students.

As a continuation of her professional experience as a mental health therapist and a chaplain, Kathleen leads and coordinates several efforts to enhance mental and spiritual well-being. Twice per month she leads the Dove Meditation and Mindfulness Group started decades ago by Don Beyer. Inspired by the work of Sister Helen Prejean, author of Dead Man Walking, she volunteers with the Wisconsin Prison Mindfulness Initiative to help incarcerated people learn skills that help them live with thoughtfulness in their environment and reintegrate successfully into communities.

Although she is retired, when called upon, Kathleen still responds to help families who are experiencing the loss of a loved one or who themselves are facing the completion of their life. As a retired interfaith chaplain, she has officiated at memorial services and supports families through their grief.

Kathleen has been part of a team of leaders for the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Marshfield, organizing the gatherings of the Fellowship twice a month. She has also volunteered on the medical team for refugee resettlement.

As avid gardeners, Kathleen and Brian's extensive garden was a featured garden walk for the Marshfield Area Respite Center Garden Walk, an annual fundraising event. Their garden covers their entire yard and provides a rich no-mow habitat for birds, bees, butterflies, and other wildlife.

Kathleen and Brian believe in loving action to support our community, the arts, the environment, and political action. As Kathleen reflects, "People are sometimes disheartened by the media that is focused on dividing us rather than uniting us. Brian and I believe people have more similarities than they have differences. The questions that guide us are, 'How do we strengthen our community through conversations and shared problem solving? How do we extend kindness to our neighbors? How do we reduce food insecurity for children? How do we support and ensure safety and provide opportunity for our youth? How do we provide shelter for those escaping domestic violence? How do we live our values forward? How do we seek opportunity, liberty, and justice for all?"

"It is an honor to serve our community. I was taught to serve others by watching my father, as the owner of a pharmacy, make sure babies had formula and injured workers had medications even when they couldn't pay him. Holding others in a place of care and compassion helps to make the world a better place. Brian and I believe that caring for the well-being of others is where we can all begin."