BETTE SCHLOESSER, RN
by the Schloesser family and Eileen Kelz

The first time I met Bette I knew I wanted to be friends. Because of her acting abilities, she was recruited by our local National Organization for Women chapter to do a skit on 'Votes for Women' by portraying suffragist Susan B. Anthony. It was the very first Women's Equality Day in 1971. Bette gave a stirring speech dressed in full period costume. Then she led a parade of us up Central Avenue complete with placards and chanting suffragist slogans. As we marched along, I noticed the front of the parade disappear into Spike's Bar. Bette led us around the bar completely scaring the regulars off their stools. I knew then that Bette marched to her own drumbeat and friendship with her would never be dull. - Eileen Kelz

Bette Schloesser was a creative spirit, expressing herself through cooking, sewing, gardening, quilting, collage-making, drawing and writing. She also loved the theater. In the 1970s, she acted in several plays at the UW-Marshfield/Wood County campus and involved her younger children in summer theater programs. As a Sunday school teacher at the First Presbyterian Church, she wrote Advent plays that her students performed for the congregation with puppets they had made.

In 1982, Bette earned a BS in nursing from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. After her graduation, she went to work for the Central Wisconsin Chapter of Planned Parenthood in Marshfield. She developed human sexuality programs for central and northern Wisconsin and traveled throughout the state leading workshops to educate youth and their parents about sexuality, communication and forming healthy relationships. In the 1990s, she successfully wrote grant proposals to obtain funding for presentations and workshops for school districts, social service agencies, prisons, youth groups, churches, clinics and hospitals. She collaborated on sex education programs with the Marshfield Clinic, the Marshfield School District and Saint Joseph's Hospital. Bette most enjoyed teaching and working closely with youth.

Bette loved nature and outdoor adventures. Her gardens were bird sanctuaries filled with native plants. Her adventures included whitewater rafting, bicycle touring, downhill and cross-country skiing, camping and hiking. Her travel interests led her to visit all seven continents, the last of which was Antarctica.



Bette Schloesser

She was "Gran Bette" to her seventeen grandchildren. Some of her favorite activities with her grandchildren were tent camping in the backyard, where she read ghost stories and joke books with the kids by flashlight. She also took her grandchildren on trail bike rides.

Community service to the City of Marshfield was important to Bette. She served on the board of the Personal Development Center, dedicated to intervention and prevention of domestic abuse. She also served on the board of American Red Cross. She volunteered at the Wood County Department of Aging, befriending the elderly. She was an active member of Altrusa, a literacy and service organization. Bette participated in the Choices Initiative of Wisconsin, an organization that introduced girls to a wide variety of career options. She also became a master gardener, volunteering with others to beautify the streets of Marshfield.

From 1990 to 2003, Bette served on the Youth Net Advisory Council directing area professionals and providing supervised daily social and educational activities for area children at risk. She was especially passionate about Youth Net -- her work on the Council inspired her to help initiate a fund to benefit the Youth Net programs.

In 2002, Bette was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer. She bravely undertook all available treatment through the Marshfield Clinic and was able to take trips in the U.S. or abroad with each of her children and to visit them in their homes all over the country.

During this time, she decided to leave her small

apartment and to build a house on the edge of a woods for her friends and family to get together with her.

Bette shared that home with family and friends for holidays, celebrations, family reunions, parties, visits and gatherings until her death at age 78 on August 15, 2008. She didn't just survive, she traveled, rode her new recumbent bike, played games with family and friends and lived a rich life up until the time of her death. Her energetic contributions to especially the youth of this community have been missed. Many of the participants of her classes still talk about their experience today. Bette touched her family and many friends with her love, energy, courage and sense of humor. She was a courageous woman who took her struggles in life and turned them into strengths. She provided her family and the youth of Marshfield with the legacy of a strong role model.