

## Kathy Biederwolf

This week we are happy to name Kathy Biederwolf as the 133rd inductee in Marshfield's 150: Heroes and Leaders, Past and Present register. Kathy Biederwolf was nominated by Kathy Campbell and the Faith Lutheran Church Adult Choir.

Marshfield's artistic community blossoms beyond other small cities. Many in that community can thank Kathy Biederwolf for helping their own talents blossom.

That's what great teachers do. Kathy's mentors included a world-renown choral music leader at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Not long after, she taught for around 15 years at Marshfield High School – showing students how the richness of music can connect with whatever careers they pursue.

She also spent decades in her church and community as a choir conductor, singer and piano/organ accompanist. She has enriched countless cultural and spiritual lives. That's because Kathy Biederwolf never stopped teaching. It shows during rehearsals.

"She has ears like radar," said Thom Gerretsen, a tenor in the Adult Choir at Marshfield's Faith Lutheran Church. "I stand 20 yards away, hidden among other singers while she plays the piano. And she tells how I screw up a note! That's amazing: I'm so thankful."

A native of Red Wing, Minnesota, Kathy is a 1969 graduate of Luther in music and German. She was in the school's Nordic Choir, which entertains audiences worldwide. The group performed in Marshfield Jan. 29, 2024. Kathy and fellow Nordic alum Bonnie Brix joined the students in singing their final song.

Kathy was a singer and accompanist for the late Weston Noble, who led Luther's choir for 57 years. Another Nordic Choir singer – former music instructor and Faith Choir Director Julie Crist – recalls that Kathy was one of Weston's favorite accompanists. "I believe he told me that with a twinkle in his eye," Julie later said.

At Marshfield High, Kathy taught music theory and directed the school's choir and Madrigal Singers. She also taught German to students and has long put that skill to good use for the region's Central Chamber Chorale. "When we perform music in German, she helps guide us



to proper pronunciation,” said Chorale singer Ann Stevning-Roe, who also chairs the group’s board.

Kathy followed Lyle Iverson as the high school’s choir director. Another skilled choral leader, Greg Reiersen, then took her place to lead Faith Lutheran’s choir. Greg called her a “truly valuable resource” in his own teaching years.

She extraordinarily shares her faith, serving the final one-third of Marshfield’s first 150 years in numerous leadership and performing roles at Faith Lutheran while helping worshipers in their spiritual journeys.

Kathy once joined others to fill in as the church’s main organist and choral accompanist. After repeat stints as Adult Choir director, she later settled into more permanent roles selecting hymns for Faith’s traditional services and as the choir’s accompanist.

Julie Crist called Kathy’s talent a beautiful gift. “Her ability to masterfully play any piece of music put in front of her is invaluable,” and Faith is blessed immeasurably by her “willingness to use her gift to serve in so many ways.” For two months in 2024, Kathy added another role: leading Faith’s choir from the piano after the previous director left to have an early-arriving baby.

It wasn’t the first time she was thrust into unexpected service. Ann Stevning-Roe was helping a judge at a regional school solo/ensemble competition around 2010 when a young singer’s accompanist fell ill and supplied a compact disc that couldn’t be heard. “The student and her mother were in a panic,” said Ann, who arranged for Kathy to transpose the song so the student could sing it.

The youngster advanced to state competition.

For years, Kathy has given the Central Chamber Chorale her alto singing voice and accompaniments that sometimes needed more than two hands. She has also performed with the Marshfield/Wood County Symphony Orchestra and the community’s former Palm Sunday concerts.

Her piano music has enhanced many theatrical productions at UW-Stevens Point at Marshfield and other local stages. It keeps singing actors in tune, accentuates speaking parts and helps scenes flow smoothly.

“The world of theatre here in Marshfield would not be the same without Kathy,” said Donna Thompson, who has directed plays and their music for numerous local performances. “She has made my job so much easier. Her ability to play so many styles of music and in any key is so impressive.”

Faith Lutheran choir members called Kathy a faithful, humble servant who shows support for her home-state pro football team, the Minnesota Vikings. "A true musician in every sense of the word," said soprano Ruth Stram.

In the city's next 150 years, Kathy Biederwolf's imprint will live on in others with an impact well-deserving of her place among Marshfield's 150 notables in its initial one-and-a-half centuries.