Donation Made in Memory of Nurse Michele Harney Robak to St. Francis School of Nursing Scholarship Fund

St. Francis Medical Center always held a special place in Michele Harney Robak’s heart. Born at the hospital in 1957, she later graduated from the St. Francis School of Nursing in 1978, following in the footsteps of her mother, Eileen Kelty Harney, a 1955 graduate. Michele went on to spend 25 years of her 41-year nursing career as a St. Francis nurse.

“Her passion was being a cardiac nurse,” says Dennis Robak, Michele’s husband of 37 years.

Michele began working in the cardiac catheterization and electrophysiology labs soon after they were opened.

“She was very much a patient advocate. A lot of patients don’t have someone to look out for them, and Michele was always mindful of that,” says Dennis, who believes Michele was well-suited for the role because she was naturally empathetic and sincere. “She’d often get letters and calls from patients thanking her for her care.”

On August 9, Michele passed away at the age of 62. She left behind a large family, including three adult sons, Anthony, Kyle and Garrett.

In her memory, Dennis asked that donations be made to the St. Francis School of Nursing Scholarship Fund. Over the month that followed her passing, $4,000 was contributed in Michele’s name. A $4,000 match was contributed by Anthony’s employer. Dennis plans to continue fundraising for the scholarship fund in honor of Michele.

“Her wish was to support a nursing student, or students—it can be split however the school prefers,” Dennis says. “It can be an incoming student or a current student who may be struggling financially. I only ask that the student be committed to the program, because the world needs more nurses like Michele.”
Dennis is planning the first installment of what he expects to be an annual fundraiser for the scholarship fund. A date has yet to be set, but it will likely take place in the spring at the Trenton Polish American Democratic Club in Trenton. Admission will be free, and there will be live music. Proceeds will be generated through a Chinese auction and a 50/50 raffle.

“Staying true to our Trenton roots was always important to us,” says Dennis, who was also born at St. Francis Medical Center. “I grew up in Trenton. Michele grew up in Ewing Township. The hospital is an important part of our community.”

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Photo captions:
Dennis Robak holds a photo of his late wife, Michele.

Michele in her St. Francis nursing school days.