



Boudreau Memorial Family Scholarship

This scholarship has been established to honor the memory of our parents Ronald and Theresa Boudreau, and our sister Sandra. They taught us the power of a dream, hard work, using challenges as opportunities to grow, and that to much is given, much is expected.

Ronald was born in 1937 and lived in Holyoke for 13 years before moving to Springfield where he graduated from Springfield Technical High School in 1955. After graduation, Dad started his career as a lithographer with National Blank Book, later known as Avery Dennison. He would stay with that company until his retirement in 1997.

Theresa was born in Ste. Marguerite, Quebec Canada in 1940. Mom was the

eighth of ten children and came to the United States in 1959 to join her older sisters and brothers who had moved to the Chicopee and Holyoke area years earlier. Dad was introduced to Mom by his co-worker at National Blank Book. His co-worker would soon become his brother-in-law when Dad and Mom married in May of 1960. The dreams of Ronald and Theresa weren't very different from any other young couple of the 1960's. They dreamed of owning their own home and raising a happy and healthy family.

Their youngest of three children, Sandra, was born in 1966 with spina bifida hydrocephalus. In 1966, the prognosis was not promising. Doctors told my parents that Sandra would likely not live to see her third birthday. Given the complications of her diagnosis, if she did survive, they should prepare for a life caring for a child with learning disabilities, would never be able to attend school, never mind live to adulthood and be capable of gaining employment. Despite expert opinion, Ronald and Theresa had a different vision for their special needs daughter. They wanted Sandra to have the same opportunities as other able bodied children. After countless surgeries and hospital stays, brought on by the complications of living with spina bifida hydrocephalus, Sandra attended Litwin Elementary School in Chicopee.

When Sandra started school, she was assigned to a classroom with other special needs children. Our parents had a different dream for Sandra. That dream powered Mom to create The Committee for Equal Rights of Handicapped, and worked with local and state politicians to advocate for classroom inclusion for special needs students. Sandra ultimately was integrated

into classrooms with other able bodied students. Mom and Dad also felt it was wrong that the state would pay to send a special needs child to state school where they would live and go to school. They knew it would be more cost effective if the state allocated a fraction of that annual expense and make funds available for parents to make their homes handicap accessible, making it easier for parents to keep their special needs children at home. Through their efforts, they did get assistance to equip their home with features that allowed Sandra to stay at home with us.

As a young girl, Mom learned the art of sewing from her mother and she used her skills as a seamstress to do alterations and make/design dresses out of our home to help with family expenses. Mom did not love to sew but she loved fashion and design and her dream was to open a bridal shop one day.

In 1980, Mom approached Dad with the idea of opening a bridal shop with a close friend and shortly after, Mom opened Bridal Corner in the Fairview section of Chicopee. The business began to grow and Mom thought it would be nice to complement the bridal shop with a tuxedo store. After searching for potential partners, my Dad opened Ron's Formal Wear in an adjacent storefront at their Fairview location. Dad did this while keeping his job with Avery Dennison. Bridal Corner and Ron's Formal Wear outgrew the Fairview location, and Mom and Dad purchased land on Memorial Drive in Chicopee, where they built an 8000 square foot facility which became the current location for the Bridal Corner and Ron's Formal Wear. Mom and Dad operated their business until 2003.

Sandra went on to graduate from Chicopee High School and then graduated from Holyoke Community College with an associate's degree while working at Bridal Corner. After graduation Sandra began her career working in the Chicopee Public Schools. Sandra continued working until her passing in December of 2005 at the age of 39, far surpassing any milestones and achievements that the physicians had laid out for her and our parents at her infancy.

Dad passed away in November of 2013 from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), a rare, degenerative and fatal brain disorder. Mom passed away in November of 2018 from complications associated with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Through our parents' and sister's lives, and the many lives they touched, the road has been paved smoother for those parents with special needs children.

As a tribute to Ronald, Theresa and Sandra Boudreau, we have established the Boudreau Family Memorial Scholarship to help fuel the dreams of students who might not achieve their goals without the help of others. It is our great pleasure that we share with you the Boudreau Family Memorial Scholarship, wishing you happiness and success in your future endeavors. Should this scholarship inspire you to pursue a career that leads you to community service, care for children with special needs, the field of medicine or medical research to help address the the afflictions that have impacted our or your family, it would be an honor to our family to know that their story can, in some way, continue on through you.

Written by:

David and Susan Boudreau - January 1, 2019