



For More Information:
Kathy Van Zeeland
414-930-3552
vanzeek@mtmary.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Former President Sister Ellen Lorenz, SSND, left enduring legacy

MILWAUKEE (Jan. 5, 2021) – Former Mount Mary President Sister Ellen Lorenz, SSND, passed away on Tuesday, December 22, 2020, at the age of 85. Sister Ellen was a faculty member in the education department of Mount Mary beginning in 1968. She served as Mount Mary’s sixth president for eight years, from 1979-1987.

After that visible role, Sister Ellen returned to the education department, spending another 25 years working with prospective teachers. Retiring from the education department in 2013, she became a part-time tutor in the Student Success Center until mid-2015.

Her legacy at Mount Mary was extensive and in particular she was known for initiating and developing the current core curriculum with its foundational course, "Search for Meaning." It has been the basis of the university’s core curriculum for nearly five decades.

As an administrator at Mount Mary, Sister Ellen and her team addressed the needs of the growing diversity on campus, established the Ewens Center to meet the needs of adult women; initiated Campus PM providing students the possibility of earning a degree through evening classes; established Milwaukee Achiever Literary Services in conjunction with the presidents of Alverno and Cardinal Stritch; and moved Mount Mary to graduate-level accreditation status with the Higher Learning Commission (then called North Central). She also oversaw the building of the Haggerty Library and the introduction of the computer age on campus.

A former high school teacher, Sister Ellen was initially reluctant to become an administrator, and teaching continued to hold a strong place in her heart. “My greatest joys often came from seeing these students develop their values and skills and go on to inspire countless other young people through their teaching,” she said during an interview. “Certainly among my greatest joys was seeing student teachers successfully working with their students.”

“She will be greatly missed as an advocate for Mount Mary and a symbol of the strong connection between the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the University,” said Mount Mary President Christine Pharr, Ph.D. “In her multiple roles she was an inspiration to many students and employees of Mount Mary as the perfect incarnation of our mission, vision and values.”

Sister Ellen was born July 6, 1935, to Genevieve and Frank Lorenz in Berlin, Wisconsin and attended school in a one-room schoolhouse until fifth grade. She earned a bachelor’s in English with a minor in Latin from Mount Mary College, a master’s in education from Loyola University in Chicago in 1966, and an Ed.D. in curriculum and supervision three years later from Northern Illinois University.

“Her keen intellect, educational excellence, appreciation of community and self-giving love gave rise to an extraordinary servant leader,” said Mount Mary Vice President for Mission and Identity Sister Joan Penzenstadler, SSND. “We are so very grateful for all the ways that Sister Ellen gave of herself for over 46 years at Mount Mary.”

The School Sisters of Notre Dame will hold a virtual memorial liturgy on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2021, and a tribute reflection will be shared with the Mount Mary campus community during the All-University Workshop on Tuesday, January 19.

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Mount Mary University is an urban Catholic university committed to social justice and the development of the whole person. Founded in 1913 by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, it is the first four-year, degree-granting Catholic institution for women in Wisconsin. Today it serves a diverse population and offers more than 30 undergraduate majors for women and eight graduate programs for women and men in four schools: Arts & Design, Humanities, Social Sciences & Interdisciplinary Studies, Natural & Health Sciences and Education, and Business. Mount Mary creates bold women who transform the world. #HerestotheBold