

ARLENE'S STORY



The Porritt Family of St. Joseph, along with dear friends, established the Arlene B. Porritt Memorial Scholarship for Curious Kids in loving memory of Arlene B. Porritt who passed away in May 2005. Dedication to her family, children, community, friendships, and her commitment to higher education led to the formation of this living remembrance. This close knit family (husband Dr. John L. Porritt and children Jeff, Susan, Lori, Amy, and John II) could not think of a better way to embrace and carry forward the loving nature of Mrs. Porritt and her belief in higher education. This scholarship, to be awarded annually, is to be used to further the education of a deserving St. Joseph High School student scholar who volunteers and/or is employed at Curious Kids' Museum. "Mom taught us that not only is education important, but participation in volunteer efforts and giving back to the community strengthens one's character," shared youngest son, John, II (Purdue, 1986).

Arlene was given the opportunity to pursue an advanced education and took full advantage of that gift. Enrolling at Penn State University, Arlene was always proud of the fact that she and Joe Paterno arrived on campus at the same time. She held him in highest regard because of Coach Paterno's support of the academic qualities in his players. Arlene began her studies in home economics, but in her junior year, transferred to Eastern Michigan University to be closer to her husband to be. She switched to early elementary education and graduated magna cum laude and immediately began her teaching career. Arlene was an outstanding educator before retiring from the classroom to start her family. She and her husband, Dr. John L. Porritt, and their five children moved to St. Joseph in 1964, becoming valued members of our community. She spent the next 41 years raising her family, teaching the life-long lessons of family, unity, and love. As with the students in her classrooms, she taught her own children to seek answers and find truths through hard work and diligence.

"Abraham Lincoln once said, 'All that we are or hope to be, we owe to our mother.' " Daughter Amy (Purdue, BA 1985, MS 1986), recalled. "Mom, you taught us so much about life and making the most of it." Brandon, Arlene's oldest grandchild, a junior at University of Iowa, said it straight forward—"But even while being scolded, as we all have been, your wisdom shown through."

One of the earliest values imparted to her children was the love of reading. “Mom would say ‘Okay, it’s time to read’, and she insisted that each of us 5 kids pick a quiet spot and read for 15-30 minutes almost every day,” recalled daughter Lori (Indiana, 1984). “Mom would read at the same time, for reading was a passion of hers! I thank her for that gift every day.”

“Mom was a very hard working mother. She taught our family the value of a strong work ethic and the importance of always completing a task,” shared eldest son, Jeff (DePauw, 1980). “Mom was our role model for outstanding character, trustworthiness, ethics, and respect. She taught us all of these traits while stressing the importance of caring and loving each other.”

All 5 children graduated from St. Joseph High School and continued on through college where each earned at least a Bachelor’s Degree, a true source of pride in any household. Arlene was “Mom” to her 5 in-law children, whom she graciously welcomed into her family. They also all graduated with degrees from DePauw, North Central College, Michigan State, Purdue, and Wisconsin, respectively. “On football Saturdays, the Big 10 was well represented in our household”, according to Dr. Porritt. It is obvious that the high esteem Arlene placed on education impacted her whole family. “Mom always encouraged us to learn, grow as individuals, and to keep achieving.” stated John II.

Nana, as this grandmother was affectionately known, built a close, caring relationship with each of her 15 grandchildren. “Nana had a special gift to make each of her 15 grandkids feel unique and special in their own way,” said daughter Susan (DePauw, 1982), herself a mother of four. “Mom, more than anything, loved doing things for her grandchildren and doing things with them. It was often a challenge to even out the events of grandparents’ days, sporting events, school plays, musicals, and dance recitals, but it always seemed to work out.”

One of Arlene’s favorite outings with her grandchildren was visiting Curious Kids’ Museum, a place of learning and wonder for the entire family. No matter how many grandchildren would be in town, she would take them all to Curious Kids’ Museum. There, she just thoroughly enjoyed watching them go from exhibit to exhibit, often getting involved with face painting and other hands on activities. She felt great satisfaction in seeing their inquisitive minds at work. Many enjoyable visits were made to Curious Kids’ Museum as evidenced by the 15 pairs of foot or hand prints hanging on the walls of the museum. Lindsay and Matthew, Nana’s two local grandchildren said, “we enjoyed going to Curious Kids’ Museum with Nana and Papa to play in The Awesome Apple Orchard and The Bubble Chamber when our out of town cousins came to visit.”

Fostering an appreciation for the arts, fine literature and culture, Arlene taught her children and grandchildren to always challenge their minds with new discovery and adventure. “Her own experiences in the world of higher education obviously impacted her deeply and this family for generations to come. My wife saw the value of a fine and diverse educational background as being the backbone of an individual’s character,” said

Dr. Porritt. “Combining an educational scholarship along with our families’ love for Curious Kids’ Museum was a natural and fitting way to remember Arlene. It will keep her memory and work alive and well.”

The continuation of Arlene’s legacy combining her special love for family, children, and the irreplaceable value of education is very important to the Porritt Family. As a gift was given to this beautiful young mind years ago, so shall it be awarded to a deserving student today with the formation of this scholarship. What better fit than to combine her legacy with Curious Kids’ Museum and their staff. Hence, the Arlene B. Porritt Memorial Scholarship for Curious Kids was established to acknowledge and enrich the educational experiences of those St. Joseph High School Students whose aspirations and dreams are without limit or boundary, and who volunteer and/or are employed at Curious Kids’ Museum.

Provided by the Porritt Family