

'She makes me smile even now'

■ Kate Coleman's spirit, tenacity live on despite losing long battle to multiple sclerosis.

By JIM MEENAN
Tribune Staff Writer

Kate Coleman passed away on April 28. But months later friends and family still can't stop talking about how she lived.

In high school, she was a cheerleader. And later the athlete in her not only loved to play softball but bowled a perfect game.

She also was a supportive mother, a loving wife, a leader, a colleague, a coach, a volunteer and most certainly a friend.

But despite her death at age 48 after battling the challenges of multiple sclerosis for 18 years, one thing Kate Coleman never seemed to be a victim.

"She was many things to many people," said her husband, Sean Coleman, who will be main speaker at the multiple sclerosis luncheon "Optimism and Hope: A Tribute to Kate Coleman" Sept. 30 at the Windsor Park Conference Center, Mishawaka. It is sponsored by the Indiana State Chapter North Central of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

"She was beloved to all who knew her. She lived her life to the fullest and lived it with hope."

In fact, Kate originally was scheduled to speak at the luncheon.

"That was our plan that we would tell her own story together of her battle against MS," Sean said.

Her passing would not stop that.

"I felt the story was as important and actually more important than when we had initially made the decision," Sean said.

Yes, there were difficulties, but Kate's message was to be far more than just about them so that "the hope could be brought to those who are struggling," Sean said.

That hope manifested itself in how she came across to people.

"Most people did not know she was sick," said Margaret Czarnecki, a friend and past teammate Kate assisted as a volleyball coach a few years



Tribune File Photo/MARK SHEPHARD

The late Kate Coleman is pictured in 2004 in her office at Saint Joseph's Regional Medical Center. The multiple sclerosis luncheon Sept. 30 will be a tribute to Coleman, who with great dignity lived with MS for 18 years.

back. "She never ever complained. She always acted like an average person and like nothing was wrong with her."

In fact, you could say she took it a step or two further than that.

"She did a lot more than healthy people," Czarnecki said recalling their days together as teammates and coaches.

"She had the win-win attitude," Czarnecki said. And in volleyball, physical limits could not stop her.

"She put her came down," Czarnecki said. "She taught the girls what they needed to know. You could tell from the way she spoke, she was a true athlete who wanted to win. She was very competitive."

Multiple sclerosis is a chronic, progressive illness that affects the nerves in the brain, spinal cord and other parts of the central nervous system. The body's immune system targets itself, attacking cells, tissues and organs. "Her physical appearance

changed," Czarnecki said. "But everything else was just the same. She laughed. She joked. And she never complained. And we were together a lot."

Her character separated her from most, recalled Sandy Gates, whose friendship with Kate dates back to even pre-high school days.

Gates treasures one of their final meetings in the last year when Gates called to say she was happy for Maggie, Sean and Kate's daughter, for playing the lead role in "Annie" at St. Joseph's High School.

The conversation resulted in the two getting together for coffee and bagels.

It was a meeting that would last eight hours, but it passed very quickly.

"No matter how much time had lapsed, it was still like we were in high school, sitting on the corner of my bed and talking," Gates said.

Kate did not feel sorry for herself, Gates said.

If you go

■ The MS luncheon tribute to Kate Coleman, sponsored by the Indiana State Chapter North Central of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, will be from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sept. 30 at Windsor Park Conference Center, 4020 Edison Lakes Parkway, Mishawaka.

■ Admission is \$35. For more information or to reserve a seat, call Margaret Czarnecki at (574) 287-2276 or (574) 276-2891. Reservations are due Sept. 19.

"Martyr was not a word for her," Gates said, "She just did what she had to do."

"She was very optimistic about her MS," Gates said. "She never asked for help. She was always the one doing something for everything else."

That spirit really lives on since her death, said Shery Purkeypille, who used to work with her at Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center, where Kate worked her way up to become a human resources manager.

Purkeypille recalled how, in Kate's eulogy, Sean noted how Kate would have asked where the policies and procedures were.

"It still makes me smile," Purkeypille said, adding it was "an honor" to be her friend. "It's just something you really cherish."

Friends could learn from her how she handled her disease with such strength and grace, she said.

"When I speak of her, it is of her having that spirit of buoyancy, it was truly like that," Purkeypille said. "She understood and recognized what the challenges were."

For Purkeypille, that spirit lives on.

"Kate really gave us a legacy of courage and strength that makes each of us a little braver and little more fearless to face our own giants," Purkeypille said.

"She made us believe we could each be better and each of us could be more."

Death does not contain that spirit.

"Her death is not really a flame that is going out with her passing," Purkeypille said. "It's really that she is a light to all of our spirits."

"She makes me smile even now."

Pals learning more about aging

■ St. Monica students partner with Sanctuary at Holy Cross residents for the school year.

By VIRGINIA RANSBOTTOM
Tribune Staff Writer

To explain to fourth-graders what it's like to be elderly, Marcia Dills brought along an old pair of tennis shoes.

"When they are new, tennis shoes are bright and shiny, but as they get older they show some wear," said Dills, the Sanctuary at Holy Cross activities director. "However they are comfortable and their soles are still good."

Dills was giving students an introduction to the School Pals program, a partnership between Sanctuary at Holy Cross residents and fourth-graders at St. Monica Catholic School.

Students will begin meeting monthly with residents to read together, work on school projects, play games and just learn about each other.

To relate to residents, Dills and chaplain Norb Stubel taught students what it's like to lose some of your senses.

Thick eyeglasses and reading glasses were handed out to simulate the loss of eyesight.

"Everything's a little blurry!" "I can't see!" "I look weird!"

Were some comments heard over the giggles.

Students were then asked to stand up and hold their right leg out. Everyone lost their balance.

"That's why we have a lot of wheelchairs there," Dills said. "Many elderly people are not able to walk anymore."

By wearing a rubber glove,

students also learned what it felt like to lose their sense of touch.

"Now touch your shirt with your gloved hand, then touch your shirt with your other hand," Stubel said. "The senses are how you enjoy life and when your senses start to deteriorate, it takes away from your enjoyment."

Students were anxiously looking forward to giving some enjoyment back to their adopted grandparent or great-grandparent for the year.

"Or there's one woman who is 103," Stubel said. "She could be your great-great-grandmother."

With only 10 students in the fourth grade this fall at St. Monica, visits with Holy Cross residents will be one-on-one. In previous years, class sizes were larger and residents enjoyed the company of two students.

"The class theme this year is hands," said fourth-grade teacher, Kari Wuzske. "What our hands can do in the community to provide a service."

Wuzske said while students learn about service, they also get to experience another generation.

"The residents look forward to the kids' visits," Dills said. "They enjoy the interaction, talking about it for days afterwards, and it keeps them in touch with community life."

Students also learned about hearing loss and how to approach and talk to a person who is hard of hearing.

"Get to know your cards," were passed out featuring a picture and short biography of each resident that will be visited.

"The program is a tradition here at the school and is now in its seventh year," Wuzske said. "Having people there on a regular basis shows them they still have value."

Briefs

STAFF REPORTS

SOUTH BEND

Park offers fall home school programs

The St. Joseph County Parks Department is offering programs on birds this fall for home school families.

Programs offered are Sept. 11, Birds; Oct. 9, Migration; and Nov. 13, Fill the Bill (Adaptations).

Each program runs from 2 to 3:30 p.m. The programs will take place in the Glenn Bauer Shelter at Bendix Woods County Park. Cost for each program is \$3 per child; prepay for two programs and attend the third for free.

Activities are geared toward children age 5 through 10, although people of all ages are welcome to attend. Registration is required by the Tuesday prior to each program.

For more information or to register, call (574) 654-3155.

MISHAWAKA

Triad plans meeting, Medicare speaker

Triad of St. Joseph County

will have its annual meeting and a program at 9 a.m. Wednesday at the Battell Community Center, 904 N. Main St., Mishawaka.

The meeting will be followed by guest speaker David Petsche of Wellcare, who will talk about Medicare. There will also be updates on area scams and the Sept. 17 Pill Drop. The meeting is open to the public.

Triad is an organization of seniors and law enforcement personnel working together on various issues.

Big Brothers run/walk set for Sept. 20

Big Brothers Big Sisters of St. Joseph County is accepting registration for the second annual Big Brothers Big Sisters of St. Joseph County 5K Run/Walk on Saturday, Sept. 20.

The event, presented by Chili's Grill and Bar, will take place at Central Park on the St. Joseph River in downtown Mishawaka. Registration and packet pickup begin at 9 a.m. with the race promptly starting at 9:30 a.m.

Sign-up forms are available online at www.bbbs-sjc.org or by calling the Big Brothers Big Sisters office at (574) 232-9958. All proceeds will be used for local youth mentoring programs.

FROM PAGE E1

Wall

Participants learned the skill of fabricating straw bale houses covered with clay.

"It's a natural and economical building material," Zieve explains. "It has a much higher insulation value. And, the structures are very solid."

In addition to painting in his studio on Generations Drive in Three Oaks, the artist is covering interior surfaces of homes and businesses with an American Clay Earth Plaster product.

Zieve says the product is a wonderful blend of clays, nat-

ural pigments and aggregates that bond cohesively with dry-wall, masonry or existing painted walls.

"I discovered earth plasters and have really been drawn to them," Zieve says. "They are nontoxic, with beautiful earthy finishes."

"The act of plastering is so rewarding. I enjoy the Old World artisan/craft aspect of it."

Zieve enjoys interior painting on a grand scale. He completed color and fax wash painting and marbling columns at St. Peter's Catholic Church in LaPorte during the church renovation process completed in 2005.

The artist earned a bachelor of fine arts degree from the

School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1977.

Currently, his artwork is exhibited at Cowley Fine Art Gallery in St. Joseph. His public or private murals and paintings are at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago, Lutheran General Hospital, Park Ridge, Ill., and Marionjoy Rehabilitation Hospital in Wheaton, Ill., just to name a few.

Natural beauty has always been of interest to Zieve.

The innovative artist was greatly influenced by 1940s-era abstract expressionist painters, including Willem de Kooning and Jean Marshall, he says.

Zieve is an innovator who developed the Infinite River: intu-

itive Painting Workshops used in private and corporate settings to promote creativity.

The workshops encourage both experienced painters and novices to approach creating a painting like a child would — free from inhibition and the influences of ego.

He says that being an artist gives him a wonderful freedom to make a statement to the world.

"Painting and drawing have become lost art forms in our culture," he says. "But there is so much information that comes from a painting. It brings the heart, soul and mind of a person into full view."

For information about Zieve, visit his Web site at

FROM PAGE E1

Sports

Adam was not a star player. He was the get-along type on a team full of get-along types. He's not a blue-chipper, not a Division I prospect.

His school, little Oregon-Davis, had never won nothing' ever before — until just weeks before the girls basketball team won the state championship.

Now it was the boys' turn. Robin had played for Oregon-Davis as a youth. In the days of the single-class system, the Bobcats were simply fodder for the larger schools at tournament time.

He had had his own state

championship dreams and his own sectional disappointments.

Now he was the official team scorekeeper, occupying the best seat in the place and watching his son play.

O-D won the Lafayette Semistate that day, and Adam was a huge part of the win. The Bobcats were going to the state finals for the first time in school history.

This is what little kids have been dreaming about for an entire century in gyms across this great state. It is as close to heaven on earth as an Indiana teenage boy will get.

I was sitting three rows behind Robin that afternoon. When the game was over, I grabbed my voice recorder and headed to the floor to try to get

some quotes.

I passed Robin on the way down and then, for some reason, I turned around to say something.

I stopped in my tracks. For there was this mountain of a man, one of the strongest people I have ever met, holding his chin, with tears pouring down his face.

Then I stopped, took a deep breath and took a few steps. I paused again, wiped my own tears away, and went back to work.

This was my mountaintop moment.

We may think sports are about wins and losses, league titles, letter jackets, plaques and scholarship offers.

But, when it's best, sports

FROM PAGE E1

Results:

Winners in dairy classes

Champion Showmanship: Jordan Carlson, Lawton
Reserve Champion Showmanship: Matt Locke, Cassopolis
Champion Lightweight Dairy Feeder: Austin Green, Vandalia
Reserve Champion Lightweight

Dairy Feeder: Collin Hassle, Dowagiac

Champion Medium weight Dairy Feeder: Jordan Carlson, Lawton

Reserve Champion Medium Weight Dairy Feeder: Matt Locke, Cassopolis

Champion Heavyweight Dairy Feeder: Amanda Hassle, Dowagiac

Reserve Champion Heavyweight Dairy Feeder: Lindsey Wright, Cassopolis

Grand Champion Dairy Feeder Steer: Amanda Hassle, Dowagiac

Reserve Grand Champion Dairy Feeder Steer: Lindsey Wright, Cassopolis

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Q: How is the loan paid back?
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Q: Will I still own my home?
A: You still retain legal ownership of your property.

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