



Bene Emeritus Award *Sandra Meleca*

Sandra (Giancaterin) Meleca, usually called Sandy, was born in February of 1947 in Rochester, New York. She graduated from Monroe High School and went on to study at SUNY Cobleskill. During high school, Sandy met Tom and they married in August of 1968. Once married, Sandy put her own educational pursuits on hold and raised their two children. Tom Jr. and Cathy remember their mom working many an odd job to help support the family while Tom Sr. worked in the construction trades. The endless list of jobs included being a greenhouse worker, a home caregiver, a floral designer and an employee at an array of retail merchants (even a short stint at McDonald's)! Sandy was never afraid to try something new to help the family.

Despite those experiences, teaching was always Sandy's first love. Sandy hadn't yet finished her degree, but she taught in some capacity at several parochial and public schools over the years. As the kids got older, Sandy decided to complete her degree at SUNY Brockport and become a certified teacher. She got her master's degree in Elementary Education in 1995, graduating Magna Cum Laude. Eventually Sandy started working in the Rochester City School District and remained there for 14 years until she retired. Although Sandy is very humble about it, her impact in education has been far-reaching. Many former students and their parents have reached out over the years to share heart-warming stories regarding the positive influence Sandy has had on their lives.

Sandy and Tom have now been married for 55 years and find joy in being involved in the Sons and Daughters of Italy, Vincent Lombardi Lodge. Sandy was particularly involved as the chair of the scholarship selection committee and served as vice-president and eventually president. This past summer, Sandy was honored as the first immediate past president to receive the Bene Emeritus Award from the lodge. This award recognizes "exemplary leadership and selfless acts of time and dedication, attention to detail and outstanding service". Sandy received the award surrounded by family and friends and it hangs proudly in her room at the Monroe Community Hospital skilled nursing facility where she is a resident.

