

Join the Living Legacy Society

If you would like more information on joining the Living Legacy Society, contact Bernadette Nowakowski '89, '08, assistant vice president of institutional advancement, at 413-265-2214 or nowakowskib@elms.edu.



Elaine Y. (Paquet) Olive '74

As a teacher, Elaine Y. (Paquet) Olive '74 strove to teach not only the traditional three R's — reading, writing, arithmetic — but a fourth R: respect.

"I always tried to maintain and encourage respectfulness — for yourself, for others, and for the environment," Elaine said.

Elaine, who won the Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Award from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation in 2004, served as a teacher in Springfield for 28 years, first in Catholic schools and then in public schools.

"In the public schools, we couldn't lead a morning prayer, so I told the children, 'Take a moment. Close your eyes. Think about how you can be your best self today, and do your best work, and be kind to others, and respect your environment.' "

That was Elaine's way of living and sharing her faith, with a spirit of respect she learned here at Elms College and from the Sisters of St. Joseph. In fact, she started her education at Elms only one week after becoming an SSJ herself, which she said was "a dual adjustment" at age 18. She served for a decade as a sister, teaching in the diocese.

"I have always been deeply grateful to the Sisters of St. Joseph — I may have left the order, but the spirit of the sisters will always be in my heart — and grateful to the Elms, for the education that I received here," Elaine said. "That education helped me provide for my family. Without that education, I don't know what I would have done."

As an expression of that deep gratitude, Elaine joined the Living Legacy Society last year with one big goal in mind: planting seeds for the future. "As a teacher, you plant seeds," she said. "You may never see the fruit of those seeds. And that's okay. It's not about results."

"This gift is not about paying back," she added. "It's offering forward, giving to the future students who are continuing the Elms legacy of helping others in the community and throughout the world."

Elaine offers an invitation to all her fellow alumni: "Please consider offering a set amount or a percentage of your estate to the Elms in your will. Consider offering whatever you can, because whatever you can is enough."

"Think about it: Where would you be without your education?" she continued. "Think about those who may not have the means to pursue an education. Your contribution may help fulfill their dreams. You're planting for the future of the Elms."

