

Anne and Elizabeth “Bette” Adler

Nominated by the North Wood County Historical Society

Wanting to give something back to the community, Anne and Bette Adler provided the impetus that led to the creation of the Marshfield Area Community Foundation in 1993. As they envisioned, the Foundation continues today to enhance the quality of life here in their home community.



Anne and Bette Adler were the daughters of John Peter (J.P.) and Rosamond Victoria (Bille) Adler. They were born in Marshfield – Anne on June 1, 1917, and Bette on June 2, 1919. They attended St. John’s Catholic School and McKinley High School – Anne graduating with the class of 1935 and Bette a year later with the class of 1936.

After their graduation, both attended Milwaukee-Downer College for two years before transferring to the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Anne graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology in 1939 from Madison, and then earned a Master of Arts degree in economics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Anne accepted a teaching position on the economics staff at the University of Toledo where she established a course in personal finance in addition to teaching economic theory. Among her first students were returning GI’s coming home from World War II.

One of the first women to earn a stockbroker’s Securities and Exchange Commission License, Anne was extremely proud to have been the first, and for some time only, female account executive with the Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Beane office in Milwaukee. At the time, this firm was the world's largest brokerage house.

An April 1955 news article in the business section of the Milwaukee Sentinel featured Anne’s success in the financial field under the title, "A Woman in a Man's World."

Like her sister, Bette continued her education after Milwaukee-Downer College at University of Wisconsin at Madison. In June 1941 she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in home economics. She then worked as a chemist for Kimberly Clark at Neenah, before returning to Marshfield to assist with the family business, a job her father had been preparing her for all her life.

After her father's death in 1959, Bette took over as president of the Adler Theater businesses and ran the company until selling to her close friend Paul Rogers in 1972.

Bette was an integral part of many local civic organizations. She was involved with the UW Alumni Association, Business & Professional Women's Club, Marshfield Historic Preservation Association, North Wood County Historical Society, Ruffed Grouse Society, Knitter's Guild, Marshfield Art Commission, Altrusa, Marshfield Women's Club, the Palm Sunday Chorus, the Marshfield History Project, and the Marshfield Area Genealogy Group. A 1993 graduate of Leadership Marshfield, Bette was later named a Leadership Class Alumna of the Year for her community involvement.

In 1993, Anne and Bette pioneered the creation of the Marshfield Area Community Foundation -- wanting to give back to the community that they loved, and that Bette still called home. Offering a challenge grant of \$25,000, they established the Adler Family Fund within the Foundation. It provided the motivating force from which Marshfield Area Community Foundation, Inc. emerged. Joe Lang, shortly thereafter, came forward to establish the Joe Lang Fund, "matching" the amount required by the Adler grant. The Marshfield Area Community Foundation, Inc. was officially underway!

In 1999, the Foundation's assets reached \$1 million and had thirty-one funds. Since then, assets have grown to over \$14 million and two hundred funds. These funds include unrestricted funds, designated funds, field of interest funds, scholarship funds, donor advised funds, project specific, fiscal sponsorship funds and legacy funds.

Among the many funds the foundation administers is the J.P. Adler Community Improvement Fund, which provides funding for brick and mortar projects. This fund became a springboard for the building of an enhanced bear habitat at Marshfield's Wildwood Park & Zoo. The improvements made it possible for Marshfield to acquire its two Kodiak cubs, Munsey and Boda.

Anne and Bette also established the Women's Endeavor Fund to support programs targeted to women of all ages and to serve as a way of honoring or commemorating the life of women.

Long before the community foundation was established, Anne and Bette were known for their generosity and community activities -- Anne in Milwaukee and Bette in Marshfield. Today the Marshfield Area Community Foundation enhances the quality of life in the community that once supported the Adler family businesses.