

Donald W. Schnitzler

We are happy to name Donald W. Schnitzler as the 105th inductee in Marshfield's 150: Heroes and Leaders, Past and Present register. Donald W. Schnitzler was nominated by his children and grandchildren, written by Kimberly Zimmermann.

"We need not go to college, or even high school...Each of us can learn that the real riches of life are the eternal reward of those who learn to love God and do His will, and who cherish the liberty of other people to worship Him as they see fit."

Robert E. Emery delivered those words as the keynote speaker as he addressed Donald Schnitzler's 9th grade class during the Purdy Junior High School commencement ceremony in 1948. Whether or not this message influenced Don, the words flawlessly describe how he spent his life in honoring his hometown of Marshfield.



Don was born March 11, 1933 to Roman and Eleanor (Bores) Schnitzler. As a child, he attended Sacred Heart Parochial School followed by Purdy Junior High School. After, he married Gloria Spencer on October 15, 1952. They lived in Janesville until returning to Marshfield in 1955 where Don managed and soon after owned the Standard Service Station located at the intersection of Fourth and Maple.

Over the years, Donnie used Don's Standard Station and U-Haul not only to support his growing family, but also to serve his community. When not turning wrenches, he spent his efforts getting to know his customers, helping him best meet their individual needs. Families experiencing economic hardships found their bills to be unexpectedly lower than what was typical for such repairs. Doctors who were frequently on call found their driveways plowed earlier than others to ensure they were able to make it to the hospital quickly in the event of an emergency. On a few occasions, he loaned his personal vehicles to out-of-town strangers who were otherwise stranded due to vehicle breakdowns. Through his simple actions, he demonstrated true respect and value for those he encountered.

His philanthropic efforts certainly did not stop at the doors of his service station. Don leveraged his relationships within the community along with his influential personality and tenacious drive to serve the City of Marshfield as a whole. During his service with the Knights of Columbus, the Elks Lodge, and the Fraternal Order of the Eagles he embodied the motto "Leave no Neighbor Behind." Donnie sought opportunities to extend scholarships, financially lessen the burdens of unexpected hardships, and aid and support mothers and babies after pregnancy. He was ready to present any worthy opportunities to his fellow Knights, Elks, and Eagles, knowing that the support of many could help all. Although he took pride in his accomplishments within the organizations, his altruistic nature caused him to rarely accept recognition.

Donnie's consistent service to others continued outside the confines of his business, religious, and civic organizations. He attended daily mass to pray for causes and people near to him. When friends and acquaintances experienced illnesses or injuries, Donnie could be counted on to visit regularly. In time, he became a familiar face as an usher for funerals at St. Johns, leading the Rosary prior to burials, and visiting many at local nursing homes. Regardless of circumstances, Donnie showed up for all he could during their times of need.

In 1998, when a Madison-based group challenged the City of Marshfield's ownership of the statue of Jesus Christ in Praschak Wayside Park, Don spearheaded the effort to establish the Henry A. Praschak Memorial Foundation. The foundation raised funds to purchase the statue and surrounding property and provide an endowment for ongoing maintenance of the site. The legal battles ended in November of 2000, and today, the foundation owns and maintains the statue and surrounding property.

"We need not go to college, or even high school...Each of us can learn that the real riches of life are the eternal reward of those who learn to love God and do His will, who cherish the liberty of other people to worship Him as they see fit." Donnie served the City of Marshfield through his love of God and his eagerness to serve His will. He sought opportunities to encourage people to become the best versions of themselves by supporting them through hardships. His impact and legacy within our community are everlasting and broad, and for those reasons, he deserves to be among the City's 150 recognized people.