

Chelmsford High School Alumni Association

CARMELA V. WIRTANEN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Established 2003

Having gone into first grade without the advantage of English as a primary language, Carmela Wirtanen forged ahead past this and future challenges with energy and enthusiasm, qualities now strongly remembered by family, classmates, colleagues, and friends alike.

She was born in New Hampshire on May 17, 1928 in a family that had come directly from Sicily, had a teaching career that spanned 20 years in the Chelmsford Public Schools, and enjoyed her retirement until her death in November of 2002. Her life spanned extraordinary years of hard work, achievement, and caring for others.

While many high school graduates go directly to college, there have always been adventurous people who went out into the world, had jobs, got married, started families and then decided that college was going to be the best way for them to fulfill their dreams. Cam Wirtanen was one of these adventurous people.

When her two children were both in school, Cam enrolled at Lowell State College, from which she graduated in 1968. Her years there were only one of the periods during which she displayed her ability to organize multiple worthwhile activities and not 'miss a beat.' She taught 4th grade, got her Master's degree and had a short time as a specialist in learning disabilities, and then retired in 1987. Her family was her first love, and this was followed closely by her love of children in general, which made her job so special to her. She also knew that by working all those years, she would ensure that she and her husband could travel more, which they did extensively over the years.

Her enjoyment of learning and her belief that education was extremely important were lovingly exhibited in her longtime tradition of reading to her grandchildren. She realized the importance of this practice in building both family relationships and academic skills. It is no wonder that the name by which her grandchildren and various other young people in the family addressed her was "Darlin'."

Shortly before her death, her daughter told her of the plan to endow a scholarship in her name, and she was proud to know that. She made it clear that she was glad that other young people would continue to be helped with their college educations long after she had passed away.