

M. Elaine Panzitta Memorial Scholarship



On Sunday, May 22nd, 2016, Mary Elaine Panzitta, known as Elaine to her family and friends, transitioned from this earthly existence to another consciousness away from this world. Her unexpected departure has left family members and many friends brokenhearted; however, keeping her memory alive with an academic scholarship uplifts spirits and assisting a student with meeting his or her academic goals would be something about which Elaine would have been very excited and very proud. She was a 1973 graduate of Wyoming Area High School.

In Elaine's personal view, the world was a very large place with room for everyone in it to live *without* judgment and *with* value – people of all races, ethnic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, religions and belief systems. She was passionate about issues of social justice around the world and believed that every person has a right to the basic needs of food, housing, safety, a clean environment, access to healthcare, access to education, civil rights and above all, human rights. Known to her friends as a champion of these causes, Elaine was happy to take any opportunity to educate others on such topics. She considered herself a citizen of the universe and had a very positive, humanitarian approach to life. Her philosophy in life was that all of us have a responsibility to help those who are disenfranchised and less fortunate and to make a collective effort to afford them opportunities their circumstances may not allow.



Elaine firmly believed that education is the pathway to solving the ills of society and that it is the tool that opens people's minds and hearts. She always reminded her family and her friends that taking a broader view of any issue is the responsible thing to do so that challenges in the world could be fully examined and analyzed and so that effective solutions could be developed and implemented. Hoping to create more awareness, Elaine was always helping people to think critically and encouraged people to not be limited when considering challenging issues.

From very young ages, Elaine and her sisters were encouraged by their parents and grandparents to pursue education and were taught that it is something that can never be taken away from anyone. They and their cousins were the first generation born in the U.S. among the extended family. The three sisters were fortunate to have a father who was college-educated in his home country of Italy at a time when primarily only the wealthy upper class of the U.S. and other countries received a college education. This was in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Their paternal grandfather came to the Wyoming Valley area to work in the unforgiving anthracite coal mines. He sent money to his family he left behind in Italy to pay

for his children's education in the hope of a bettering the lives of generations to follow. Their maternal grandfather also bore the hardship of leaving his home country of Italy to immigrate to the U.S. ahead of his family to work in a harsh factory environment for a cable wire manufacturer in the hope of establishing a better life for his family.

Their mother attended college later in her life after she raised her family.

Elaine and her sisters had always been made keenly aware of the difficult work their grandfathers had done coming from very little education; and their grandfathers always encouraged them to pursue as much education as possible, also believing that it was the answer to improving one's life.

Having had the value and pursuit of education inculcated in the household, Elaine was the ideal student. While at Wyoming Area High School, she was the student teachers loved – a gifted student, serious about her studies and one who could and would be happy to help others in her class. Teachers would sometimes have Elaine lead the day's lesson in class, particularly in history classes.

Her love of history, political science, law and philosophy eventually took her to the University of Pennsylvania, where her major was European Intellectual History – essentially the historiography of ideas and thinkers. This perfectly captured Elaine's interests and Elaine for that matter – **AN IDEAS PERSON AND A DEEP THINKER!**



Elaine always felt privileged to be a student of nationally and internationally known professors who had established themselves as respected academics in their fields. She was keenly aware of how her education at an Ivy League university opened up an extraordinary world to her as well as an expanded view of the world. She would want others to have the same opportunity.

Such studies combined with her interests in issues of social justice led her to study law at Delaware Law School of Widener University. After receiving her Juris Doctor in Law, she embarked on her career in legal areas of personal injury and intellectual property.



Throughout her career, Elaine was generous with her time and her education, sometimes viewing her legal endeavors as much-needed social work while helping people with their life challenges. Outside of her career work, Elaine was ALWAYS helping a friend or a relative who was in need of legal advice or assistance. She extended her giving and caring nature to every person and every issue and her brilliant mind to assisting people in finding creative solutions to their challenges.

How perfect practicing law was for Elaine - an advocate and an advisor by nature! When asked what qualities friends would associate with Elaine and how they would remember her, repeated over and over again in various forms were the themes of:

- Humanitarian
- Visionary
- Creative thinker
- Solution creator

- A person with a deep understanding of the universe
- Spiritual
- One of great wisdom
- Insightful
- Perceptive
- Intuitive
- Empathetic
- Compassionate
- Excellent listener
- Genuine
- Gifted
- Very positive
- Caring and gentle nature
- Passionate
- Thoughtful advisor
- Teacher
- Student.

Elaine also had a great appreciation for the arts and was always in awe of the beauty of creativity in many forms. She relished the idea of positive, inspiring creativity and took every opportunity to support artists.

Given Elaine's intellectual talents and her academic inclinations, her sisters, Susan and Carla thought it would be fitting to create an academic scholarship for a graduating Wyoming Area senior in her name. They also thought it would be a perfect way to honor their cherished sister and to keep her memory alive. Elaine was both a gifted student and a gifted teacher! Her sisters hope to inspire a special student!



CRITERIA: The scholarship is intended to encourage a student to explore the world and himself or herself through academic studies and to assist in directing his or her energies toward a career of service to others. It will be awarded to a student intending to pursue higher education and planning to major in one or more of the following areas of study: social work; psychology; philosophy; the arts; architecture or law.

REQUIREMENT: No word count requirement or limit. Applicants must meet the following **CHALLENGE** with an original written presentation.

Your essay should explain:

1. **HOW** you plan to accomplish your project
2. **WHY** you selected this specific project
3. **WHAT** do you foresee is the benefit to society

READ CAREFULLY! A generic general essay used for other scholarship applications will not work.

CHALLENGE: You are asked to design a community project that would bring the most benefit to all. What would the project be and what would be the goals for the project? Why did you select this specific initiative?

Important Note: You are encouraged to think beyond a one-day or one-event/annual fundraiser. A fundraiser is not the objective here. The objective is to conceptualize a project that would ultimately benefit the broader community and that would effect long-term societal benefit/beneficial societal impacts. The community project can be an environmental one or a mental health one or an arts project or one that is related to any other issue you consider important. Be sure to explain "**HOW**" you would do it, "**WHY**" you chose this project and "**WHAT**" are the benefit(s) to society.

Some examples of potential projects/ideas:

1. An ongoing environmental clean up project along the river or around a lake or in a park or other green space. Creating a cleaner environment contributes to healthier natural resources, a healthier ecosystem, and a healthier human population into the future.
2. Planting trees throughout the community. Trees clear the air; conserve topsoil; protect water supplies; slow climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide; cool and shelter homes and, therefore reduce energy consumption; add value to homes; and provide habitat for diversified species that are critical parts of the ecosystem of our planet. All of these impacts provide long-lasting environmental and societal benefits into the future.
3. A mental health-focused project in which mental health professionals are recruited to volunteer their expertise and time to serving the community - creating incentive and an opportunity for members of the community who might otherwise not have access to such assistance to avail themselves of such services. Creating improved mental health in the community benefits society in general into the future.

Finalists may be interviewed for this scholarship.

The M. Elaine Panzitta Memorial Scholarship Selection Committee will select the candidate for this award.