

CAPITAL REGION GIVES

Student support center to continue O'Brien legacy

Maria College promotes campaign to fund center in memory of Frank O'Brien

By Jennifer Patterson

Albany

Frank O'Brien loved to see people succeed.

That's what his daughter, Maureen O'Brien, remembers about her dad, who died in 2010 at age 74 after a battle with cancer.

This supportive legacy will be honored by Maria College, where O'Brien served as chairman of the board of trustees for close to 25 years before his death.

A campaign is underway to raise money for the Frank O'Brien Student Support Center, which will provide a holistic approach to help students with diverse learning needs as well as personal and social challenges. Integrating academic support with personal, physical and spiritual services goes hand-in-hand with the college's mission of mercy.

"It's exactly the kind of place my dad would have championed," said O'Brien, the executive director of government affairs at Motorola Solutions who serves on the Maria College Board of Trustees. "He was thrilled to be chairman of the board and participate in the Mercy mission, helping people of all walks of life succeed."

Frank E. O'Brien Jr. was a longtime insurance executive who was active in charity and educational causes in the Capital Region and beyond.

An Albany native with deep ties to the community, O'Brien graduated from The Albany Academy for Boys in 1953 and later from Notre Dame. He returned to Albany in 1960 to work with his father, Frank E. O'Brien Sr., at the Fuller and O'Brien Insurance Agency and took over the business after his dad's death.

O'Brien's family, including his wife, Mary Beth Casey O'Brien, a former trustee at Maria College, daughter Maureen and her husband, Paul Vogt, opened the college's campaign with a gift, and fundraising took off from there.

"We launched the public phase in May and exceeded some of our primary funding goals," said Helen Adams-Keane, director of development at Maria College. "Our first-phase goal was to raise \$300,000, which was a success, and now we're seeking funds to sustain the center."

A devout Catholic, O'Brien worked closely with the Sisters of Mercy,



Submitted photos

The Frank O'Brien Student Support Center at Maria College will house a tutoring center as well as student support, intervention and career services, opportunity programs and pastoral care.

Support learning differences



To make a donation to the Frank O'Brien Student Support Center at Maria College, go to <https://www.mariacollege.edu/forms/student-support-center>.

especially Sister Laureen Fitzgerald, who served as the college's third president until she retired in 2012.

Thomas Gamble is now the president.

Fitzgerald, who was recently honored with president emerita status, and O'Brien worked together to introduce flexible course schedules for working adult students.

Maria College serves a nontraditional student population. With an average age of 27, some have returned to finish a degree or are attending part time and on weekends to prepare for a new career.

"Our student body is not traditionally prepared for college and the level of support they need is quite significant," said Sister Victoria Battell, vice president for planning and mission integration and associate vice president for student affairs. "They would get lost in a bigger system, so we strive to know them personally and what their needs are."

The Frank O'Brien Student Support Center will house a tutoring center to be named after Mary Beth Casey O'Brien as well as student support, intervention and career services, opportunity programs and pastoral care. The student support suite will be named for Donald S. Rubin, who served as vice chair alongside



Maria College is promoting a campaign to fund a center in memory of Frank O'Brien, seen here with Sister Laureen Fitzgerald.

O'Brien for more than 20 years, with support from his son, David Rubin and Sano-Rubin Construction.

The Mercy philosophy will be at the heart of the center, extending support beyond academics to give students access to all services they need in one place, coordinated by a new student affairs team.

"We have events planned for Mercy Week that will culminate with the center's dedication on Sept. 21, which really takes the mission into the future," Battell said.

"This type of program is incredible," added O'Brien, who with her family will support an annual scholarship to benefit a student who utilizes the center's services. "It takes young adults with learning differences and creates an environmental where they can be successful."

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