

# Friends remember Marie Kallal and her famous kitchen

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**ALTON** - Residents of the entire Riverbend are mourning the loss of **Marie Kallal**.

Kallal died on the afternoon of Saturday, Dec. 17, 2016, at the age of 68 in her home in rural **Jersey County**, surrounded by family. Her death was a result of a two-month battle with cancer. Those who remember her small shop in **Downtown Alton** called **Marie's Kitchen** say they will always remember Kallal as a kind woman who would give anything she had to anyone asking and made the best hot potato rolls they ever had.

**Matt Contarino** met Kallal when he and his wife, **Cathy Contarino**, moved to Alton in 1986. He said he worked at Hudson's Jewelers and spent his one free weekday each week helping Kallal do day-to-day operations in her kitchen, which was located at **215 West Third St.** She started the kitchen in 1985 and it continued for 14 years, eventually evolving into her catering business, which she operated until her retirement in 2013. Her venture was even featured in the ***Wall Street Journal***. In her obituary, the Kallal family attributes her success to her hard work and her great friends, such as the Contarinos.

"She was a woman who was remarkably kind to anyone she met," **Matt Contarino** said. "On my days off, I would go volunteer to wash dishes, bus tables and serve food for her. She always worked there by herself. She had the best hot rolls in the world you could purchase. She would give them away to her friends, people in need and anyone who would ask for them."

Her giving spirit is what Matt Contarino remembers most about Kallal. He said she was a wonderful person who would give all she had to people. He recalled her donating pies, cakes and hot rolls to people in need as well as financial donations, for which she did not seek credit. He described her as a woman who was willing to share all she had with anyone who had less.

"I helped her out with other people who worked downtown," he said. "They gave their time to help her, so she could work in the kitchen and serve people. Eventually, she had retirees come in and work the cash register, so she could dedicate all her time to cooking and serving people."

The dining area in Marie's Kitchen was small; her restaurant usually served takeout diners. Matt Contarino said anyone who took the time to sit and enjoy a meal inside, however, was treated to a fun experience with great company.

"Her laughter was contagious," he said. "Her kids would come in sometimes, too. They were as fun getting to know as she was."

Matt and Cathy Contarino were devastated when they received word of Kallal's cancer. When she knew she was getting close to the end of her life, Matt Contarino said Kallal accepted her fate with grace, largely due to her strong Christian faith. He said her last word was "amen," as if she was concluding her life as a prayer.

"She was comfortable in knowing she was going to pass," he said. "Her Christian faith was very prominent, all the way to the end. She was a remarkable lady. She was constantly doing for others."

Marie Elizabeth Kallal was born in **Sheridan, Wyoming** on Nov. 10, 1948. She met **Jersey County** native, **Henry Joseph Kallal** when they were both attending a 4-H meeting in Chicago. After a few years of courtship, the two married on Dec. 29, 1969, in Sheridan, Wyoming. Together they produced four children, who have given them seven grandchildren, with another one due any day.

Visitation for Marie Kallal will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 21, at **Crawford Funeral Home** in **Jerseyville** from 4-8 p.m. A Mass of Christian burial will take place on Thursday, Dec. 22 at **Holy Ghost Catholic Church** in Jerseyville with **Father Patrick Gibbons** officiating. She will be buried in the **St. Francis Xavier Cemetery** in Jerseyville. Memorials may be given in her honor to either St. Francis/Holy Ghost Catholic Schools of Jerseyville or to the **Blessing Hospice of Greene County**.