

Mary Byron left legacy of being advocate for others with disabilities

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE – **Mary Byron, of Edwardsville**, left a legacy of being an advocate for people with disabilities in school and in life in general.

For 20-25 years, Byron served on the IMPACT board and she left a permanent positive impact on **Cathy Contarino, now IMPACT CIL executive director**. Mary died recently on Jan. 9.

“I worked with her and her family in my early years and they left a big impact on me,” Contarino said. “She was really interested in being an advocate in the school district for children with disabilities. Being an advocate, she helped her family get some things resolved at the high school. She and her husband, Judge Nick Byron, were always opened minded and just great in the community.”

Contarino said Mary Byron was also involved in the Daughters of American Revolution and spent a lot of time tracing historical topics.

Mary had a large influence in her husband, Nick, and his legal and political career as State's Attorney and Circuit Judge. As a teacher, she believed education should be available for all, regardless of financial or physical abilities.

Mary attended Columbus Grade School and graduated from Edwardsville High School on June 7, 1949.

Mary attended Monticello College, Godfrey Illinois graduating with an Associate's Degree in June, 1951. She later attended Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland, graduating with Honors in June 1953 with a Bachelor's Degree in American History and Civilization.

Mary was involved in many organizations in Edwardsville. Among some of her favorites were the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Colonial Dames. She is descended from many ancestors in the various armed services of the United States, Col. William Crawford (a close friend of President George Washington). Her father, the late, Dr. Roy S. Barnsback also served in the U.S. Military as a medical surgeon for the U.S. Army in World War I.

During Nick's time in the U.S. Army Military, they lived at Fort Benning Georgia. Later they moved to Clayton, Missouri, when both Nick and Mary attended graduate school at Washington University. While Nick was at Washington University School of law, Mary received her Master's Certificate in Education and began teaching fifth Grade at Conway Elementary School in Ladue, Mo.

Mary and Nick had four children together and five grandchildren.

“She had a lot of passion and energy,” Contarino said. “Her advocacy really shaped me in my career. I was young when I met her and her husband, and had just started to forge my way in independent living. She taught me a lot about advocacy and being a great advocate. I was always be grateful for that.”