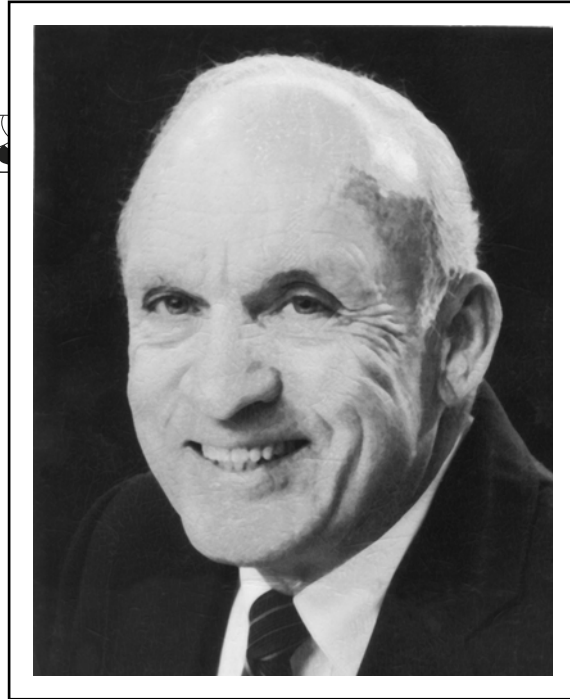


2009

William F. Kildee, Sr.



William Kildee's life has been a legacy of great passion, conviction, faith and love for his family, his parish, the Catholic schools, and the Grand Traverse community.

In his early faith formation, Bill served as an acolyte for the daily pre-dawn Masses at Holy Angels Convent. Bill had special affection for the Dominican sisters as his aunt, Sister Philomena, was one of the first girls to enter the order in 1891 from St. Francis. She wrote the biography of Mother Aquinata, founder of Catholic schools in Traverse City. Bill proudly shared his 1928 copy with others so they would know this rich history.

Bill was a newspaper reporter for *The Spirit of St. Francis*, an acolyte, a Sodality member, a player on two District championship basketball teams, and president of the 1942 senior class. The Sisters at St. Francis had recorded that, "William showed great leadership qualities."

After serving with the U.S. Army in WWII, Bill began his lifelong dedication to furthering Catholic education. He was active in the PTA, a leader in the Boy Scouts, a founding member of the Catholic Athletic Association in 1948, and was on the St. Francis Parish Council. When Bill and his wife owned *The Cradle to Teen Shop*, Bill would, unknown to anyone, order extra uniforms for Sister Lucinda to quietly give families in need.

Bill's Christian ethics and integrity made him a well-respected businessman. Enduring friendships were made over discussions and coffee at Stacy's restaurant. He joined other leaders in guiding the growth of downtown through the Downtown Development Authority and Chamber of Commerce. Bill co-chaired with his daughter, the Chamber's Drug and Alcohol Addiction Committee.

Bill and his school pal, Wally Campbell, formed the comedy team of "Willy and Wally." For over three decades they brought great joy and laughter to many all over the state while raising thousands of dollars for schools, charities, and the Rotary Club. In 1977, they were enthusiastically received in Washington, D.C. at a performance for U.S. Senators. Bill used his gift of zaniness in producing and writing much of the successful annual local Rotary shows.

As Rotary president in 1976-77, when oil reserves were discovered on Rotary property, Bill suggested the creation of a separate board to administer the revenues. With other key club members, a public foundation named Rotary Charities was formed. Since then, over \$36 million have been given in grants throughout the five county area.

In 1969, Bill became a charter member of the consolidated Grand Traverse Area Catholic Board of Education, serving as president in 1973-74. During the Catholic schools financial crisis in the 1970s, Bill pursued the shared time concept with the superintendents and school boards of GTACS and TC public schools. It is recognized that Bill's negotiating skills helped initiate the dual-enrollment program. However, Bill always believed that the history of the good relations between the two school communities and faith in God made it possible.

In 1971, Bill helped establish the Grand Traverse Educational Foundation. It assures needy and deserving children the same opportunity that he and his five children had in attending Christ centered schools to learn their faith and how to love and serve the Lord.