

Molly Potter Scheu

Molly Potter Scheu loved school in her native Buffalo, NY. She says had a great time, and jokes that a friend said, “yes, everyone had a great time with Molly”. It may simply be a symbolic comment, but Molly Scheu does appear to have fun even when she’s doing something serious, like gathering friends to help set up the Women’s Fund of New Hampshire.

When she and Barbara Zeckhausen began directing their considerable energies toward creating a new non-profit dedicated to women helping women, Scheu already had logged a long career of service to others.

She and her husband, Ed, retired CEO of Luminescent Systems, became philanthropic partners based in the Hanover area, where they’ve lived since 1975. Their names show up as donors to dozens of causes, from housing to education, symposiums and art exhibits, David’s House, Woodbury College, the Visiting Nurse Association. From their summer home on Cliff Island in Maine’s Casco Bay, they’ve aided the Island Institute and Outward Bound among other groups.

But they discovered one potentially helpful organization did not exist. No New Hampshire non-profit focused exclusively on women’s issues. The Scheus even discussed creating their own “Ed and Molly Scheu” fund within the N.H. Charitable Foundation when, as luck would have it, a friend from Colorado, Dottie Lamm, suggested setting up a separate Women’s Fund. Both Molly Scheu and Barbara Zeckhausen, who was looking into some of the same issues, heeded the call.

Molly’s sensitivity to women’s issues began in her native Buffalo. Her mother was a single mom, divorced in an era when few women were forced to manage on their own, and raising three boys and Molly. “It was not an easy thing,” Molly said, “She toughed it out for many many years.”

Molly was named for another woman who inspired her as a youngster, an Aunt Molly who was the first woman lawyer in New York City. With a lot of help from grandparents, the younger Molly attended the Buffalo Seminary, a girls school where she said she loved her teachers, and Smith College where she graduated in 1948.

A year later – on New Year’s Eve -- Molly Potter married Ed Scheu (pronounced “shy”) a World War II Navy veteran of the DDay invasion of France. He set out to build a successful business career; she set out to raise a family. Two boys and a girl were born in four years.

As her children grew up, Molly Scheu worked at various things. She taught school for a while, and volunteered. But she wanted more and was advised by her daughter, by then an architect, to go back to school. So she did. Nights. She won a master’s in education from Northeastern University and went to work almost immediately as assistant dean of the Dartmouth Medical School.

She’s retired now but still plays tennis, skis, attends meetings, volunteers for all kinds of things. In May, 2007, she gave a lecture at a symposium at Boston’s Museum of Fine Art, and she’s volunteered as a special gift agent for her 60th Smith College reunion. Of her mother and aunt and others along the way, Molly Scheu says: “These are heroes to me, women who stepped up and did something with their lives.” She might add the name “Molly Scheu”.