

The Bob Calavano Memorial Scholarship Fund was established by Bob's wife Phyllis to provide opportunities for children to attend Camp Orchard Hill and to memorialize a man who devoted himself to making a difference in the lives of children.

Here is Bob's story as written by Bill O'Boyle in the September 30, 2015 edition of the Times Leader. We are so honored that Phyllis chose Camp Orchard Hill as the recipient of his scholarship fund and invite you to participate in carrying on his legacy.

Bob Calavano of Swoyersville passed away last November. For 29 years, Bob went to the Loveland Playground in Swoyersville daily and interacted with children in the neighborhood by playing basketball, baseball, hitting golf balls or just talking with them.

He left a positive impact on all.

To memorialize Bob, people living in that neighborhood planted a tree at the playground last Sunday, which would have been Bob's 68th birthday. Several people spoke, offering memories of a man who wasn't that well known outside of his neighborhood, but was a legend to all who did know him.

"He just knew how to deal with us and our issues," said Megan Kopicki Marx, a 38-year-old mother of three. "He just got us. He knew how to be there for us."

"The Dash," a poem by Linda Ellis, talks about the dash that appears on gravestones — the dash between one's birth date and date of death. The poem asks us if we can be proud of our particular dash.

Bob's dash was one of significance. He touched many lives, all in a positive way. The problem with most dashes is that most of the world never gets to know the stories behind the dashes.

That's why writing about Bob and his dash is so important.

Here was a man who unselfishly gave his time to help kids in his neighborhood. He left an indelible mark on all, a mark those kids will, in turn, leave on their children.

Regina Kazokas lives near the playground. She observed Bob interacting with kids for many years. She knows the amount of time Bob spent helping kids so she organized the tree-planting event.

"Bob just loved kids," Regina said. "As a parent, we knew when Bob was around, our kids were safe."

Regina said she and other neighbors wanted to make sure Bob's legacy lives on in the playground.

Megan called me to talk about Bob.

"Bob was the heart of the park," she said. "He was always there to play with any neighborhood kid. Whether it was just a shoot around, one-on-one, or a full-court game, he kept up with all of us and usually showed us up."

A former teacher, Megan is now a stay-at-home mom. She met Bob when she was 7, calling him a wonderful influence on her life.

"Bob was a staple in our lives," she said. "He always knew when we needed something."

Megan said she and many other "park kids" leaned on Bob. They would often pour their hearts out to him, telling him things they were afraid to tell their parents.

"Everything we did was important to him," Megan said. "He always made us feel important."

Bob's wife, Phyllis, couldn't believe the outpouring of love shown at the tree planting as more than 100 people attended.

"These people did this from their hearts," Phyllis said. "It was so beautiful. It was a lot for me to take in; everyone was so kind."

Kids who are now adults attended — all with their own special memories of a very special man.

"They all talked about how Bob made them better," Phyllis said.

That right there is a heckuva "dash" for a human being — to be able to have helped other people become better is quite a legacy.

Phyllis said Bob followed his park kids through high school and college. He would take candy to the park, always offering what he knew each kid liked. He would offer hoagies, go for bike rides, take the kids for ice cream — always bringing smiles to their faces.

Phyllis recalled a day Bob came home with six tennis rackets. He told her some of the kids were talking about tennis and how they would like to learn to play. Bob made it happen. He bought the tennis rackets and tennis balls and taught the kids the game.

Phyllis said a 5-year-old girl once told her Bob “just couldn’t help himself” — that he always wanted to help kids any way he could.

Phyllis said “the love of the Lord” was present at the tree-planting ceremony. She said it was good to see how much Bob was appreciated and loved.


I never met Bob Calavano, but I wish I had.

As far as that dash between birth and death, from what I now know about Bob, his dash could stretch around the world and back.

I stopped to see the tree and read the inscription on the plaque. It says Bob was a “positive influence” for 29 years.

Thanks to those who knew him best, Bob and his influence will live forever.

Bill O’Boyle

In memory of   
**Bob Calavano**  
who has had a positive  
influence on the lives  
of our children for  
the past 29 years.

September 27, 2015