

Nicci & Merle Henke

— Endowment —

Merle and Nicole Henke were long-time residents of Devils Lake, North Dakota. They were both raised in Oliver County, North Dakota, and graduated from Lincoln High School in Center.

Nicole attended Minot State University and earned a degree in education, majoring in deaf education. Merle graduated from Lake Region State College and Minot State University with a degree in social studies. He continued his studies at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

The Henkes moved to Devils Lake so Nicole could teach at the North Dakota State School for the Deaf. She began working there in 1965 and retired in 1997. She then spent several years working part-time for the Lake Region special education program in Devils Lake. Merle worked for a time with the Devils Lake Police Department and then for twenty-four years with the Bureau of Criminal Investigation. He retired in 1994.

Nicole was known by family, co-workers, and friends as a patient and compassionate teacher, mother, grandmother, and mentor. She volunteered her talents as an American Sign Language interpreter at Saint Peter's Lutheran Church where she was an active member.

Merle and Nicole were active volunteers in their community through 4-H and church programs with their children Karla and Shannon. Both of their children graduated from Lake Region State College, in 1985 and



1991, respectively.

Nicole was known for her compassion, loving demeanor, and patience. She was diagnosed with cancer in 2007 but gracefully remained full of positivity and joy during her various treatments. In March 2013, Nicole died and left behind a legacy of loving the Devils Lake community and a passion for American Sign Language (ASL). Merle passed away in 2021.

This endowment fund is given in honor of Nicole and her legacy as an ASL interpreter. The award will be given to students in the American Sign Language and Interpreting Studies program. ●