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FEATURED

Sturm family honored with kiosk during CommUnity event

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Cynthia Peltier (middle) along with Rolf and Hans Sturm cut the ribbon for the Doug and Margie Sturm kiosk "Beloved CommUnity" event on Sunday.

Justin Engle/The Daily Item



LEWISBURG — The Sunday gathering at Hufnagle Park was exactly what Doug and Margie Sturm were about: people talking to each other, community outreach, neighbors helping neighbors, poetry and music.

The focus being on the Lewisburg couple — not so much their thing.

"They would have been embarrassed by all this," said Cynthia Peltier, co-founder of CommUnity Zone who organized "Our Beloved CommUnity," a celebration that opened with a dedication of the community kiosk that honors the Sturms, known for their activism and social justice interests and who died within a month of each other last year.

Doug would be angry, Peltier said, and Margie would have insisted on no attention. "They always were in the background," she said, "but they were stalwart in the background."

That strength was evident among about 40 local agencies that had booths with information about myriad service opportunities: health care, education, animal assistance, neighborhood development, children in need to name a few.

And the message of the day embodied what the Sturms stood for: "how to take control, be involved, don't put it off on someone else's shoulders," Peltier said.

Everyone remembered the Sturms that way.

"They were people of such great integrity," said Ann Keeler Evans, minister of the Unitarian Universality Congregation of the Susquehanna Valley, among the many attendees who also knew the Sturms well. "They changed the face of activism in this area and were just loving, fabulous people."

Lewisburg residents for more than 50 years, Doug Sturm founded CARE, the Community Alliance for Respect & Equality, which cosponsored Sunday's event. He was chair of Bucknell University's Department of Religion and acting chair of the Political Science and Geography departments. He was an active participant of the Lewisburg Prison Project, Hans said, and helped create many local organizations focused on community and humanity.

Margie Sturm taught English in the Lewisburg school district and belonged to the League of Women Voters of the Lewisburg Area, among many other groups including Transitions, social concerns committee for Beaver Memorial United Methodist Church and Democratic Women of Buffalo Valley.

Sons Rolf and Hans Sturm were among the celebrants, both having come in from New York and Nebraska, respectively, for this first event and lending their tribute through music. Hans Sturm said he found the event “overwhelming.”

“So many organizations and people coming together, this is what father was all about,” Hans said. “Community was the most important thing. Life is so fragile, and using the gifts we’re given” to foster inclusiveness was among Doug Sturm’s goals.

Equality and social justice were passions of the Sturms. “Each of us has a passion,” Hans said, “and the issue is finding what that is. My father had a passion for social justice.”

