

*“...I was blessed to get to have you in my life ...  
In my heart there’ll always be a place for you for all my life  
I’ll keep a part of you with me, and everywhere I am there you’ll be.”*

Faith Hill sang these beautiful lyrics of “There’ll You’ll Be” in the 2001 film “Pearl Harbor,” and they resonate with the heart of the Annual Bill Sugra Memorial Golf Outing, which keeps at its heart the memory of Bill Sugra, who lost his life in the tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001.

This year, the golf outing marked the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 on Aug. 25 at Green Pond Country Club, Bethlehem Township. The event drew 137 golfers to hit the greens to honor the memory of Bill, remember 9/11 and raise funds for those in need.

At age 30, Bill was a network administrator in Cantor Fitzgerald’s eSpeed division on the 103<sup>rd</sup> floor of the World Trade Center.

The golf tournament is the cornerstone of fundraising for the Bill Sugra Memorial Fund for Needy and Disadvantaged People, launched by his family, parents Bill Sr. and El Sugra and sister Tracy Sell. The Sugras have been parishioners of St. Thomas More, Allentown since 1973.

And the day truly is a family event, including Tracy’s husband Steven and their young children, Reagan and Tripp, who chose the colors of this year’s volunteer shirts – Irish green for the men and pink for the ladies.

And what was Reagan and Tripp’s favorite part of the golf outing? Riding in a golf cart with Grandpa Bill Sr., and the food – hot dogs, hamburgers and the best of picnic-type fixings.

On a more serious note, El and Tracy spoke of how the family took Reagan and Tripp to New York this year, and for the first time the children saw their Uncle Bill’s former apartment and visited the National September 11 Memorial Museum.

The museum stands in perpetuity at the site of the attacks next to the Freedom Tower as a promise that we will never forget those taken from us on that terrible day.

Though Reagan and Tripp weren’t yet born when their Uncle Bill died, the family has kept his memory alive to them with stories and photos. There’s a family room at the museum where family members can write a note to their loved one lost on 9/11, and the children both wrote a note to their uncle.

The Sugra family surely feels blessed to have had Bill in their lives, and the volunteers and golfers – even those who never met him – feel blessed to be a part of this special day every year and feel that, through his family, they knew him too. And Bill’s spirit of giving is truly present in the day and the fund that bears his name.

While Bill Sr. and El and Steven and Tracy chair the event, they had some much appreciated co-chairs: Oblate Father Daniel Gambet, president emeritus of DeSales University, Center Valley; and Chris Birkhead, a partner at HMK Insurance, Bethlehem.

“I was truly honored to serve as co-chair,” said Birkhead. “I have tremendous admiration for the Sugra family’s dedication to honor the memory of their son Bill through this tournament and the Memorial Fund.

“The Sugra’s generosity has touched so many of the needy and disadvantaged at dozens and dozens of organizations throughout the Lehigh Valley,” said Birkhead, who with his wife Mary is a parishioner of St. Thomas More.

Volunteers at the golf outing come together each year like a family at the event, and this year a special family member was missing: Betty Moch, who at 98 would have been the oldest volunteer, passed away earlier this year, and she was missed.

“Mom loved the people, the food, the idea of giving her time,” said Moch’s daughter Elaine Anderson, a retired school teacher from the Wilson School District, who with her mother began volunteering at the golf outing about eight years ago.

Anderson said her mother had been happy living in the country and in her own home.

“Mom’s nickname was ‘Mugger,’ Anderson said, explaining Moch had also volunteered at Bethlehem’s Musikfest, Celtic Classic, Christkindlmarkt and Blueberry Festival.

“I like volunteering. It’s better than sitting home feeling sorry for myself, and I can benefit the organization,” Moch said when volunteering at the golf outing in 2015.

Years ago, Moch was the only woman working in Research and Development at the former Dixie Cup, Easton, and later was sent to Three Mile Island by Metropolitan Edison. “I never went to college, I learned on the job,” she said in 2015.

The Bill Sugra Memorial Fund began when students at St. Thomas More School – of which Bill was an alum – raised \$75,000 to assist with his medical expenses with the hope he’d be found alive.

El Sugra said the fund is distributing \$85,000 in Bill’s memory this year to more than three dozen community organizations, raising the total to \$675,902 granted to more than 112 organizations over the past 16 years. The fund is a way to honor Bill’s memory, and grasp a ray of light from the darkness of the tragedy and grief.

The golf outing always begins with a morning event for children from The First Tee Program, Embrace Your Dreams and The Boy’s and Girl’s Club of Easton, who receive instruction from area golf pros. At lunchtime, the children received a certificate and a gift bag.

The Gilbert’s/Sing for America of Palmer Township performed beautiful renditions of “The National Anthem” and Lee Greenwood’s “God Bless The U.S.A.” before the golf outing’s shotgun start.

The day wrapped up with a dinner at Green Pond that included a raffle and silent auction. Alisa Baratta, executive director of Third Street Alliance, Easton was guest speaker. Third Street Alliance is a wonderful organization that provides a safe and healthy space for women, children and families to live, learn and thrive.

Title Sponsors were Scott Mazda, Scott Chevrolet and Dunne Manning, Inc.

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Past grant recipients include Embrace Your Dreams; Boy’s and Girl’s Club of Allentown; Lehigh County Conference of Churches; Sacred Heart Hospital, Allentown; Catholic Charities, Diocese of Allentown; Mercy School for Special Learning, Allentown; Camelot for Children, Allentown; the Eastern Pennsylvania Down Syndrome Center; Greater Lehigh Valley Muscular Dystrophy Association; William Allen Chorale of Allen High School; Allentown Ecumenical Food Bank; Meals on Wheels of Lehigh County, Inc.; and Meals on Wheels of Northampton County.