

Letters from Readers

Community pulled together to honor musician Vogt

To the editor:

The recent loss of the our longtime director of music, friend and colleague, Richard Vogt, was devastating. He was more than just musical leader of The First Congregational Church of Greenwich—he gave a fuller and richer meaning to the term “pillar of the community” in so many ways.

It was extremely comforting to watch the church family and our friends in the community unite so quickly to support a memorial service for Richard on June 3 that I believe would have met even his most demanding requirements. Pulling off a service for 800 people with a reception following for 600 was Herculean task, miraculously accomplished through the efforts of the clergy, church staff and many volunteer members of the congregation.

The support shown by members of the community beyond our congregation was something to behold. Any number of people stepped up with offers of food, people power, equipment, media support—you name it.

One of the first calls was to Bill Hoover, general manager of WGCH, to see if we could broadcast Richard's memorial service. Bill jumped into action and aired the service on a delayed basis on Sunday night and added a number of tune-in announcements as their contribution to the effort. Our own Bob Small handled the technician's duties and an extensive editing job on a moment's notice.

The next call was to publisher Bill Rowe at Greenwich Time who immediately agreed to provide space to let the community know of the broadcast and put us in touch with Joyce Gabriel, public affairs director, to get the ad written.

Both these outstanding media showed what the best of local journalism is all about, and they enabled a far greater number of Richard's friends and admirers, especially those senior citizens who could not get to the service, to say their goodbyes.

And it went on and on. Angie Viscardi of Viscardi's Colonial Inn in Old Greenwich sent over meatballs and chicken wings because, as she said to me later, “Richard was like family to me.” Wayne Loparo of J. Wayne's Catering in Cos Cob provided hot and cold hor d'oeuvres for the reception in excess of his remuneration, and Fairfield Tent Co. provided a mammoth tent at 15 percent of the cost of any other estimate we could find.

Others who stepped in to help were Tony Friend, who videotaped the service and broadcast it to the overflow crowd in the Daniel's Center. The members of the Greenwich Choral Society took part in the service and helped sing a Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah that will long be remembered. Frank Keegan, director of parks and recreation, helped arrange parking. Laidlaw provided buses to shuttle servicegoers. Bill Schock provided parking spaces at the Old Greenwich/Riverside Community Center. Steve from Rapid Repro in Danbury turned around a program on a dime that was perfect for the occasion. The Greenwich police and fire departments ensured the safe and smooth running of the day.

We at First Church consider ourselves fortunate to have had Richard Vogt as our good friend and musical leader for nearly 29 years, and we mourn his passing. At the same time, the help and concern offered by so many serves to remind us how fortunate we are to live in our community. Richard would be proud of all of you. On behalf of the clergy, staff and members of First Church, I thank each and every one of you.

William L. Sandberg

*Chairman, Music Committee
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