



## Helen Cosentino Passantino

June 18, 1932 - August 9, 2024

Helen Cosentino Passantino, 92, passed away peacefully with hospice care at her daughter's home in Elizabeth City, NC on August 9, 2024. Born on June 18, 1932 in Wyckoff, NJ, Helen devoted her professional and personal life to community service and giving back.

Her professional life included her employment as Clerk of the Surrogate Court of Bergen County Superior Court in New Jersey. There, she assisted former prosecutor and Judge Fred Galda with the daily duties of holding court and the necessary recording of bails, documents, and judgments. She prided herself on being able to work in the judicial system closely with Judge Galda who respected her for her work ethic and dependability. In addition to being fair and impartial, she remained strong in her personal convictions. Helen was an asset in her capacity and was very well respected by all who crossed her path, whether it be with personal or professional acquaintances.

Helen also had the same impact in her personal life, which was community driven. If Helen saw an injustice, she made every effort to single handedly correct the situation. She was not one to be reckoned with when there was a cause that impacted the most vulnerable, disabled and impoverished populations. Helen assisted many individuals in court proceedings with a supportive heart. She was instrumental in improving the town parks and petitioning the Bergenfield County Council for a stop sign that was absent at a

busy 4-way street causing numerous serious accidents. Helen's outreach included the homeless and bettering the lives of animals. Helen fostered two chihuahuas and later adopted them. Helen's motto was if you see something (as it pertained to the negative) say something and then do something about it. She never remained silent when a wrong was brought to her attention. Helen cared for older family members as well as strangers, when their health declined. Helen was an accomplished self-taught artist and enjoyed painting and drawing landscapes and flowers.

Later in life, Helen and her beloved husband Richard Passantino Sr., retired to Maine, where Helen took up the cause to get a dedicated ball field for the kids in the community. They resided there until her husband's health declined and they moved to be closer to family and medical care in Georgia.

After the move to GA, Helen wasted no time in getting very involved in her new Newnan, GA community. She continued giving back even during her aging years. She helped feed the homeless on holidays and also collected coats and warm blankets for them. Helen was very

proud and involved in her church, St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church (SMM) in Newnan, Ga. She collected and donated stuffed animals for Coweta County Dept. of Children and Families and the Coweta County Sheriff's Dept. She believed that handing out stuffed animals to children in distress was a comfort tool for scared children who found themselves being neglected or abused. At SMM Helen participated in many ministries including Secretary of the Women's Guild for three years, Mercy Meals, and was also a sponsor for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Helen participated in the fundraising to build the church itself and the handicapped railing to assist the older population during mass. She participated in the Rosary group and counting contributions group, Prayer Shawl group, St. Vincent de Paul, Welcome Committee and SMM Senior Committees. Helen was a Eucharistic Minister to

homebound church members, worked with Vacation Bible School, taught religious education and worked the Prayer Line for many years. She volunteered in the church office and often helped in the church nursery, as well. Helen was humbled by being honored in 2005 to be selected for Woman of the Year by the St. Mary Magdalene's Council of Catholic Women.

Helen received a Distinguished Service Medal from Prevent Child Abuse-Coweta, the Power of Prevention Volunteer Award for Prevent Child Abuse Georgia. Helen was the recipient of a resolution on the Senate Floor of the Georgia State Capital by retired Senator Mitch Seabaugh honoring her for her multi-faceted volunteer history. Under Helen's leadership as President for ten years, (retiring at 80 years of age) the Prevent Child Abuse-Coweta donated 12 simulated Shaken Baby Syndrome dolls to be used to educate the community about this issue. SMM church and several community organizations partnered together to put much needed safety nets in place for children who found themselves at risk for abuse and neglect. April is National Child Abuse Prevention month and Helen always placed Pinwheels in front of the Coweta County Courthouse to show that much more needed to be done to protect children. She traveled to the State Capitol to lobby for more stringent laws and punishments regarding children's rights and to increase the penalty for child maltreatment. She was successful and the law was changed.

Helen always held near and dear her ability to be a loving and caring wife and mother. She loved being a wonderful homemaker and raising her family. Helen excelled in cooking, especially Italian dishes and enjoyed cooking and baking for family holidays and special celebrations.

Summers were a special time. Helen packed up a picnic lunch and traveled to the lakes in NY state for a fun filled time with the family. While she could not swim, that did not hold her back from spending time with family by the sand

and water. There were always yearly family vacations which held fond memories for the family to reflect upon, now that Heaven has gained an angel.

Helen was preceded in death by her beloved husband of 54 years, Richard Passantino Sr., a proud Navy man who at 18 years of age participated in WWII and was blessed to come home safely. She was also predeceased by her parents, many sisters, a brother, and an adopted grandchild, Alex Gross-Russell who himself was a victim of severe child abuse at hands of his biological parents, leading to his death. Helen is survived by her sons, Richard Passantino, Jr. (Rosemarie), Steven Passantino (Sheryl), and grandchildren Ashely Passantino Robinson (Chase) and Nathan Passantino and niece Mary Medurga. Her memory will always be especially cherished by her daughter Lynn Passantino Russell and grandchild Brandon Murphy-Russell.

Helen was truly an angel, who was unequivocally unselfish and made sacrifices for her family, causes and the communities she resided in. The one word that describes her best is stellar as one close friend recently shared.

A Funeral Mass will be held at St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church (3 Village Road, Newnan, GA 30265) on October 25, 2024, at 11:00 am with a private memorial service and burial to follow at the Georgia National Cemetery in Canton. The family wishes to extend their heartfelt gratitude to all who have offered their support and condolences during this difficult time. In lieu of flowers, the family asks for contributions be made to the St. Mary Magdalene Church Debt Reduction Fund.

McKoon Funeral Home, 38 Jackson Street, Newnan, Georgia is also assisting the Passantino Family. Condolences and memories may be shared at [www.mckoon.com](http://www.mckoon.com).

McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory

# Previous Events

## Memorial Mass

OCT **25**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

St Mary Magdalene Catholic Church  
3 Village Rd  
Newnan, GA 30265  
(770) 253-1888

# Tribute Wall

KH

“Helen was such a positive influence in my life. I met her when I moved to Georgia in 2010, and enjoyed her friendship at Mass and in the women’s guild. She lit up with a smile when she saw me- so welcoming - she was always kind and loving, and for her causes (child abuse/shaken baby) she was fierce and determined when she needed to be. I’m honored to have been her friend. She is and will be greatly missed.

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**Kathy Holcomb** - October 23, 2024 at 05:27 PM

MH

“Just learned there's going to be a funeral mass at SMM for Helen. I sadly won't be able to attend, as I will be out of town. But my thoughts and prayers will be for the whole family and friends that Helen had, at some point, touched their lives in such a positive way. God Bless.

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**Michelle Helmeczy** - October 19, 2024 at 10:52 AM

KK

“So many ways to describe Helen. Mentor, fighter, thinker, lover, agitator, peacemaker...one of those people who impacted so many people. She also made the best cream puffs for every church event! I never got your recipe Helen. Thank you Helen for all you did as the hands and feet of Christ in our lives. With love, thanks, admiration ...your sister in Christ. Kathy Kelly-Huey

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**Kathleen Female Kelly-Huey** - October 18, 2024 at 04:49 PM

JW

“ So sad to hear this news! I knew Helen for only a short time at St Mary Magdalene Parish. She was someone you just wanted to know. Her eyes welcomed you and her heart embraced you. Some people come into your heart and quietly leave others (Helen) left footprints on my heart! Rejoice in Paradise dear one - I can hear Jesus saying “well done my good and Faithful servant”. My prayers for the family.



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**Judy Williams** - October 18, 2024 at 02:51 PM

MH

“ Oh Helen. What a sweetheart you ALWAYS were every time I saw you at church. You always welcomed a hug. Always had a beautiful smile. Always had a heart as big as gold. I always looked at you as a Mother Theresa figure. You seemed to just have that warm, kind, giving heart. Thank you for being a part of my memories and I know you will be greatly missed at Saint Mary Magdalene as well as anywhere else you touched peoples lives. My prayers go out to all the family.



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**Michelle Helmeczy** - October 03, 2024 at 11:07 PM

“Caring, compassion and concern were a few of the traits that Mom and Dad possessed. They had concern for others across many different causes, always helping people in need, even if they put her own needs behind. Mom provided decades of community service within the church as a founding member and as an extraordinary minister empowered by the virtues of faith, hope and love, as well as the Women’s Guild and the inception of Prevent Child Abuse, Coweta County. Through her faith, she continued to provide support within the community and to help people. I think that was where she found her solace: in giving back. Dad was a caring and loving husband, son, father, and grandfather.

Mom and Dad were about making sure family, health and happiness were at the forefront of importance. Mom and Dad were devoted to everything they did to help their family, community, society, and others. They knew what had to be done today to insure a better tomorrow. Mom and Dad always found time to spend with the family and took great pleasure in sharing meals and being together with family and friends. Love for their family and the pride in their children’s accomplishments were paramount. In our conversation at a very young age Mom would say, “Honor the truth” and “If you set your mind to it, you can do anything.”

My mother's and father's greatest gifts were simply their kindness and generosity. They offered kindness in their words and in giving. They never expected to be rewarded for their efforts, yet I think they believed the love the family and friends felt for them was its own reward. Underlying their spirit, goals, hopes and dreams was a simple and constant factor: their choice to be kind. Beyond any circumstances- they chose, above all, to be kind.

We lose loved ones, and our hearts feel the pain. Mom and Dad’s spirit, heart, and soul is with everyone here today. Mom and Dad were loved by many and will be remembered. I feel inspired by the way my mother and father chose to live their lives. To quote the Dalai Lama, “This is my simple religion. There is no need for

*temples, no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.”*

*This beautiful sentiment resonates deeply. Kindness, indeed, is a universal language that transcends borders, cultures and spoken words. It requires no elaborate rituals or grand structures. Instead, it blooms within the chambers of our hearts, nourished by empathy and compassion. For in acts of kindness, we find solace, purpose, and connection. May our hearts remain open, our intentions pure, and our actions guided by this simple yet profound truth.*

*Mark Twain wisely said, “A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the unseen influence of that kindness will ripple out, touching people you may never even know.” It’s not about grand gestures; it’s about those tiny bridges built between strangers.*

*Kindness is making life choices that prioritize and demonstrate respect for the environment, other living beings, and all people. Kindness is not a seasonal or occasional act, but a habit, a lifestyle, and a continual practice. Kindness is showing compassion and acting for the greater good of all. Kindness reflects God’s love and character. Mom and Dad consistently displayed the attributes of kind souls. Above all, they were kind.*

*As we say our goodbyes, we do so with a heart full of love and gratitude for the wonderful woman and man who was our parents. Mom and Dad will live on in our memories. They live on in the quiet joys and relationships they brought to their lives. Above all else, their wisdom, kindness, and compassion will be with us forever. Just as they provided guidance to so many people, so too will their guidance remain with us, our family, and friends, throughout the rest of our lives. I want to thank everyone here for being part of their life. They will be greatly missed.*

*Richard*

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**Richard Passantino** - September 13, 2024 at 05:51 PM