

SMAAUW Toni Seidelmann Memorial Scholarship for 2025

About Dr. Toni Seidelmann (1945-2024)

Antoinette Louise Pighetti Seidelmann, affectionately known as "Toni," lived a life defined by her love of mathematics, dedication to education, and deep devotion to her family, friends, and community. Born in Chicago in 1945, Toni discovered her passion for mathematics as a teenager. After graduating in 1966 with a degree in mathematics education from Chicago Teacher College North (now Northeastern College), Toni started her long career as a math instructor. From elementary school to college, she taught students of all ages, sharing her love for math and her passion for teaching.

Toni married her husband Jim shortly after earning her undergraduate degree, and together they raised two daughters. In the early 1990s, she became Math Department Chair at Thornridge High School, a role she held until retiring in 2006. Impressively, after raising her children, Toni returned to school, earning her master's in 1998 and her doctorate in 2005, remarkable achievements that demonstrate her perseverance as well as her love of math. Throughout her 30 years in Illinois, she was deeply involved in her community, building lifelong friendships. Toni and her family also enjoyed traveling, often combining their trips with camping and fishing adventures.

Once retired, Toni and Jim moved to Smith Mountain Lake (SML), VA in 2006. It did not take long for Toni to become a cherished member of the local community and to build friendships across the area. Of particular note, she was an active participant in the Smith Mountain branch of the American Association of University Women (SMAAUW), dedicating her time and energy to supporting educational opportunities for women and girls. And even though Toni had "officially" retired, she continued to teach math as an adjunct professor at Ferrum College, a pursuit to which she was again fully devoted.

In 2012, Toni was diagnosed with breast cancer, but after undergoing extensive treatment, she successfully overcame her diagnosis. She then became a dedicated volunteer at the Discovery Shop at SML, a non-profit organization raising money for the American Cancer Society. She refused to let her cancer define her, continuing to teach at Ferrum and to travel with her family.

Toni's dedication to education, learning and helping others was a guiding force in her life. She always balanced this with a warm, empathetic demeanor, bringing humor and fun to both her professional and personal life. When her cancer returned and metastasized in her final years, Toni once again fought with courage, passing away peacefully with her family by her side. In a testament to how much the SMAAUW meant to her, Toni designated the organization as the recipient of memorial donations after her passing.

The SMAAUW Toni Seidelmann Memorial Scholarship

The SMAAUW Toni Seidelmann Memorial Scholarship celebrates Toni's legacy by supporting students who share her passion for STEM, particularly those with a focus on mathematics. Toni's life was defined by her dedication to education, her love for her family and friends, and her commitment to her community. Applicants are encouraged to reflect on how they demonstrate the values that made Toni so extraordinary—perseverance, integrity, authenticity, kindness, and a joyful spirit.