

Alice L. Foley

Mention Alice Foley's name to a long-term Brighton resident and be prepared to hear nothing but praise for her long career in the Brighton school system. Say her name to alumnae of Nazareth College to hear additional kudos for her second career as president of the college, now Nazareth University.

Alice L. Foley was born in 1906 on a farm in Savannah, New York to David and Mary Foley. Alice was the middle of three daughters, all educated in Clyde schools. When her father died in 1927, the family went to live with Mary Foley's brother, Michael McGrath, on Pullman Avenue in the city. After her graduation from high school in Clyde, Alice went on to Nazareth College where she earned a bachelor's degree in English before going on to graduate studies in English and education at the University of Rochester. Later studies included Fordham and the Graduate Teachers' College at Columbia University. At some point, Alice also received her certification as a school psychologist.

One of her first teaching positions was with District 15 in Greece but by 1934 she had begun her thirty-six-year career with the Brighton School District, progressing from teacher to elementary school principal to district director of instruction to assistant superintendent. During her years at Brighton, she maintained her connection to Nazareth, serving on the board of advisors for the college. She also became active in the New York Teachers' Association, becoming first vice president of the organization in 1949, the same year she became principal of Brighton #1 school. In 1964 Alice Foley became the president of the 95,000 member New York State Teachers' Association.

Alice Foley was active in the American Association of University Women (AAUW), serving as education chair of the group in 1955. Later that year the Brighton School board created the new position of Director of Instruction, appointing Alice Foley as its first head. Her appointment was based on her long experience in the educational field and her thorough knowledge of Brighton schools.

Miss Foley was a gifted speaker on educational topics, often serving as keynote speaker for the organizations to which she belonged.

After sixteen years working in Brighton, Alice, her sister Esther, and their mother, Mary, bought a brand-new house on Penarrow Road in Brighton in 1950. Neighbors remember Alice as a kind and personable lady who decorated the house with items picked up in her travels. In 1966, Alice traveled to Asia, seeing Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, and Bangkok. For her, the tensions at the 38th Parallel, the line separating North and South Korea, remained strong even fifteen years after the truce.

In 1971 Alice Foley retired from Brighton School District #1. In the first weeks of her retirement, she said that she missed the children so much that she avoided driving by the school. Later that year came the second career, however, when Nazareth College reached out to her to become the director of continuing education. It was a new program for the college, one she said was for "people who come here to finish a degree, start a degree, or just for pleasure." Six months later, she was appointed a vice president of the college. In April of 1972, Alice Foley was named president of the college, the first person to hold that post who was not the member of a religious order. During her four-year tenure, the college went from all women to coeducational.

Alice Foley retired a second time in 1976. She died in 1993 at the age of 86, after a long illness. Her accomplishments and the obvious joy that she found in the educational field single her out for special attention for March, Women's History Month.

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