

## THE 2004 WANSBORO AWARD RECIPIENT



Bill Bierkle

Katherine Wansboro, rscj loved Michigan and was committed to the best in education for young women as she followed in the footsteps of other great Religious of the Sacred Heart educators who came to Michigan in 1850. One hundred years later, Mother Wansboro's Mission as Reverend Mother of the Community at Lawrence Avenue put her in the position of directing real and dramatic change for the Academy of the Sacred Heart in the late 50's. She had little finance when the Academy was in need of new direction. She was able to use the phrase "courage and confidence" as she sought help to move here to Bloomfield Hills. She set out her goals and with directness and some cajoling of the Father's Club made sure she had the right people to help her do the right things. The results are before you. She made

friends who are still friends of the Academy in her honor. She searched out the mystery of why God wanted the school to be here and she trusted others to make a commitment to goodness and to the Heart of Jesus.

With this as background to the awarding of the Wansboro Medal this year let us take a look at the recipient and his relationship to the Academy. Bill Bierkle wanted the best in education that he could find for two young women, his daughters. Bill Bierkle took on the task not only of invested parent but became a friend to the faculty and often championed their needs and ideas. His gift of one (the first) computer began the technological change which we now take for granted. The finances at the Academy were precarious to say the least at the time Bill became a member of the Board of Trustees. As he took on the responsibility of Chairperson, the Academy was just beginning its plans for a new building. Like Mother Wansboro, he was undaunted by the complexities of hiring construction companies and challenged any plan which might suggest a less than best outcome. He helped the leadership of the Academy to make the best compromises when difficult decisions arose. He would ask, "How can we keep peace? What will this decision matter in the years to come?" Bill has the gift of cajoling others to do some hard things for the sake of others. His humor and generosity matched his deep commitment. After a trip to a Trustees Conference for the Network of Sacred Heart Schools, Bill remarked, "I thought I was just going to a meeting now I feel part of a cause." Hayley Bierkle says it best, "I can't remember a time when my Dad was not in some way working for Sacred Heart because he felt so strongly about what the school stood for and wanted his two girls to grow up in a school that taught them to love themselves and others."

The 2004 Wansboro Award is presented to Bill Bierkle for his years of dedication to the Academy of the Sacred Heart as a parent, friend, member and Chairman of the Board of Trustees for nine years, and a stakeholder in the values and Mission of the Religious of the Sacred Heart.