Viteks craft lasting legacy

By Julianne Endres

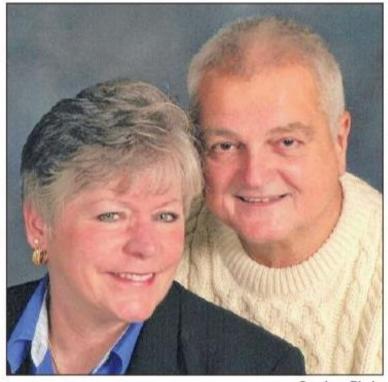
Watertown Area Community Foundation

If Jo Vitek left Watertown tomorrow her legacy of working to prevent sexual abuse, as well as her commitment to serve victims of it, will continue long after she's gone.

Vitek has ensured that her passion and mission will carry on through her partners by establishing the newest Agency Fund at the Watertown Area Community Foundation.

But she will be the first to tell you, this isn't just about her legacy. It's also about her husband, Tony's. Vitek lost Tony earlier this summer and has donated \$100,000 in his memory to begin the Divine Providence of South Dakota Fund.

"Tony was a very gifted person and a good provider," Vitek said. "I inherited an IRA. I reinvested that. Over the course of



Courtesy Photo

Jo and Tony Vitek pose for a portrait. Tony died earlier this year. Jo is a retired Watertown police chief.

five years, the Foundation should receive almost \$19,000 each year from that. So, hopefully, the fund will turn into approximately \$200,000 in five years."

Originally from Georgia Vitek moved to Florida where she was a police officer. She answered Watertown's call in 2005 when she and Tony moved to Watertown and she began serving as chief of police. After 36 years in law enforcement, Vitek retired in 2013 to answer an even bigger call.

A victim of child sexual abuse herself, Vitek began spending her retirement time serving others wounded by child sexual abuse, serving faith communities and their clergy, enhancing community awareness of child sexual abuse and sexual assault and providing leadership training to area groups and organizations.

The umbrella organization for her work is Divine Providence of South Dakota. Its board oversees four ministries each with its own advisory board. They are:

- Pulpit Supply Designed to help area churches in need of speakers.
- Hope, Healing and Hoofprints (HHH) Established by the Viteks in 2016 to benefit children of sexual abuse in providing a faith-based equine experience for them at Joy Ranch. Funding for this ministry is also administered by the Community Foundation.

■ Hope In God for women, men and teens
— A Christian network of survivors of child sexual abuse and sexual assault who provide spiritual and emotional support to each other while increasing community awareness in northeast South Dakota.

■ Providence Solutions — Leadership training and strategic planning for churches.

None of this happened by accident. Serving this area in this manner was not only a result of Vitek's background, but was greatly influenced by Jolene's Law Task Force formed by the South Dakota Legislature in 2014. Since then this group named after Jolene Loetscher, an abuse victim - has been making a difference for victims in South Dakota, It consists of law enforcement, mental health professionals, tribal entities, victim witness advocates and politicians.

The task force was instrumental in establishing the pilot program REACH, an acronym for Respond, Educate, Advocate, Counsel, Heal. This child advocacy center is located in Watertown and helps strengthen the state's response system and improve supportive services to the victims and their families.

While Vitek has no intention of leaving Watertown, she knows very well that we don't know when "our time" will come. Tony, though, she says, had some profound insight she remembers vividly.

"He said, 'God will take me before He takes you," Vitek recalled. "'God's not going to take you until you have accomplished what He wants you to do."

Tony told Vitek this on his 80th birthday and shortly before he died.

"He was a humble and faithful servant," Vitek said of her husband, "and he died on the exact date that he was baptized.

"Tony really built the foundation for Divine Providence to occur. 'I'm saving for you and your work' he would always tell me. My salvation is dependent on how I manage the gifts God has entrusted to me."

The Watertown Area Community
Foundation includes an
accumulation of endowment funds
that serve the greater Watertown
area. The funds grows over time to
generate an increasing stream of
funding to support its intention in
perpetuity.

Many non-profit organizations in the Watertown area have established Agency Endowment Funds at the Foundation to support and enhance their organization as well as ensure their sustainability far into the future.

"Many organizations in our community have realized that establishing a fund is a part of planning for their future," said Jan DeBerg, WACF executive director. "From the oldest funds, like United Way, to our newest, Divine Providence of SD, these funds have the potential to help fuel their organizations and the people they serve forever."

While the Foundation accepts many unrestricted gifts, donors may choose to designate a gift to any of the Agency Funds if they choose to do so. A listing of Agency Funds follows:

Arrow Education Foundation Fund Beacon Center Fund Boys & Girls Club of Watertown Fund Castlewood Historical Society Fund Codington County 4-H Fund Codington County Historical Society Fund Codington County Search & Rescue Fund Divine Providence of South Dakota Fund Friends of Acoustic & Blues Fund Glacial Lakes Humane Society Fund Joy Ranch Fund Lake Area Zoological Society Fund Mellette Memorial Association Fund Prairie Lakes Healthcare Foundation Fund Preschool Scholarship Fund Sea of Goodwill Fund Town Players Endowment Fund United Way Donor Fund Watertown Area Disaster Relief Fund Watertown Area Special Olympics Fund Watertown Community Projects Fund Watertown Hockey Association Building Fund Watertown Lions Park Project Fund Watertown Police Department Fund Watertown Regional Library Fund Watertown Senior Citizens Fund Watertown Trail Fund

