



Mary Michel

Sister. Former Board Member. Long-time Supporter.

Mary Michel says joining The Guild of Catholic Women (GCW) – Guild Incorporated’s founder -- was a fluke. In 1996, she was asked by two people not only to join the organization, but to step into leadership. She decided to give it a try, taking the lead on fundraising projects. “I thought, I’ll support this organization; I’ll go to the lunch; I’ll write the check,” says Mary. “But, I never expected to get as involved as I did.”

Something shifted the night Mary volunteered for the annual Christmas Party, an event for individuals served by Guild and their families, hosted by GCW. She thought about her brother with schizophrenia. “I saw how much fun they were having; I saw that they were treated with respect,” Mary says. “It’s something I don’t think my brother ever really experienced.”

Shortly after joining GCW, Mary was elected President. She joined Guild Incorporated’s board of directors as a representative for GCW, remaining on Guild’s board until 2014 when – citing longevity -- she decided to step away to “make room for someone new.”

During her work on the board, Mary got to know Guild Incorporated’s president, Grace Tangjerd Schmitt. “GCW had such confidence in Grace,” Mary recalls. “If she explained a need, then we said, ‘well, we need to support it!’”

Of the programs and services Mary remembers GCW supporting, she says helping to open the CSP -- “to have a place for people to socialize and to deck it out with a pool table” -- was particularly exciting. It was also another time, Mary says, when her thoughts turned to her brother. This was true again in 2014 when Guild launched Equilibrium (EQ) Youth Services. “Had this service been available, my brother’s path would’ve been different,” she says.

Reflecting back, Mary says she would’ve stayed involved with Guild even if she didn’t have family experience with mental illness. She was touched by the outcomes of Guild’s work, becoming an inaugural member of the Ladder of Hope Giving Society. She credits ongoing involvement to her appreciation for the “long stability in leadership,” seeing services reach more people, and watching innovations like Delancey Services and EQ unfold.

“I’m very proud to say that I’ve supported Guild Incorporated. “I’m happy to be connected – to be involved in an organization that’s making a real difference in peoples’ lives,” Mary says. “Guild is at the top – like the cream – always at the top.”