

Eunice Joyce Hendrix

Hendrix, Eunice Joyce Ann Arbor, MI

Eunice Hendrix died at her home in Towsley Village at the United Methodist Retirement Community, Chelsea, Michigan on Thursday, September 6. She was 83. She was an early advocate of conservation and environmental protection and is remembered for outdoor education featuring field trips and hands-on learning. Ann Arbor public school students will recall her as the "Owl Lady", a teacher who brought owls and hawks into the classroom for living demonstrations. Her interest in the natural world came to her through her father, Glenn C. Gillespie, a pioneer in the field of outdoor and wildlife motion picture photography. It developed further as she earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Michigan State University in 1944 and a Master's degree in botany from the University of Michigan in 1947. She attended the University of Michigan's "Bug Camp" near Douglas Lake in northern Michigan. At Douglas Lake she met her future husband, Robert Hendrix, a graduate of the University of Texas. Mrs. Hendrix was an early member of local environmental protection groups such as the Audubon Society and participated in the organization of a series of lectures that brought eminent naturalists to Ann Arbor. She was a proponent of soil conservation, wetlands, and parks. She worked tirelessly to increase the amount of parkland available to Ann Arbor's residents. In the mid-1960's she became interested in environmental education. In cooperation with Dr. William Stapp of the University of Michigan, she developed an environmental teaching program for the Ann Arbor Public Schools, while at the same time returning to school herself to earn a teaching certificate. She was active in designating areas near schools for nature study. Both Eberwhite Woods and Pioneer High School Woods are living memorials to her efforts. In her teaching career she led children on field trips to local natural areas and farms over three decades. The sites were selected for ecological diversity. Even in an area consisting of only a few acres, it was possible to find freshwater ponds and streams, open fields, and hardwood forests. In the 1980's, she expanded her interests to local history, and was active in preserving local historical sites, and leading field trips with the topic of "Early Ann Arbor". She was interested in farming history, and had an extensive collection of early farming tools. This collection was donated to the Waterloo Farm Museum. She was a founder of the Washtenaw Land Conservancy and was involved with the Little Traverse Conservancy and the Nature Conservancy. Eunice Hendrix received the Conservation Education Award from the National Wildlife Federation in 1971, the Conservation Educator of the year award from the United Conservation Clubs in 1992, and the Julian W. Smith award for Outdoor Education from the Michigan Alliance for Environmental and Outdoor Education in 1994. In 1993, a scholarship fund was established in her name at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens by the Ann Arbor Public Schools Environmental Education Program. She was preceded in death by her husband, Dr. Robert Hendrix. She is survived by her four children, David, Daniel, Glenn and Anne, by her sister Dr. Eleanor Gillespie, and by eight grandchildren. A memorial service will be held in the main chapel at the Chelsea United Methodist Retirement Community, 805 West Middle Street in Chelsea, at 4 p.m., Saturday, September 15. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Ann Arbor Public Schools Science and Environmental Education Endowment Fund (a designated fund within the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation; www.aacf.org), the Little Traverse Land Conservancy (3264 Powell Road, Harbor Springs, MI 49740), or the National Parkinson Foundation (www.parkinson.org).