



## Miss Elaine M. Contento

June 28, 1940 - January 7, 2023

Elaine Marie Contento (Miss Elaine), born June 28, 1940, released her loving energy and transitioned from this physical world on Saturday, January 7, at the age of 82. She lived a life of faith, generosity, service, and love of family.

Elaine had humble beginnings as the granddaughter of Italian immigrants and the daughter of first-generation Americans Rose Carriero and Victor Anthony Contento. She grew up on the “other side of the tracks” on Cortland’s south end. They didn’t have much but she was grateful for all the opportunities she had. She graduated from Cortland High School in 1958, earned her BS in Education in 1962, and received an MS in Education in 1966 from SUNY Cortland.

Growing up during the John F. Kennedy years, Elaine’s service orientation was deeply rooted in the concept, “Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.” Between 1968-1971, Elaine was among the first group selected to go to Alaska as a volunteer in VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) as well as teaching English to people in Santiago, Chile in the Peace Corps. Her first job was at Marion Margaret’s from 1956-1962. Between 1969-1973, Elaine was a teacher in Clinton Elementary School in Clinton, NY and a permanent substitute teacher in Seattle, Washington. Beginning in 1973, Elaine was instrumental in establishing the CAPCO Head Start Program in Cortland, NY and was its

Director. She took a one-year sabbatical from 1978-79 in Denver and Colorado Springs, Colorado where she was on the Policy Council and provided Parent Decision-Making Training in the area before returning to her position in Cortland. Additionally, Elaine was an independent skin care consultant for Mary Kay Cosmetics for many years starting in 1986. In 1992, she taught two semesters of Communication at TC3. Elaine's giving nature was further shown through her committee service on the YWCA Board of Directors, Cortland Enlarged City School District Board, Advisory Board for Health Operations on the Cortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Education Services, Communication Committee for the Community Council for Cortland County, the Cortland Area Child Care Council, a founding member of the John Pilato Jr. Distinguished Alumni Wall of Fame Committee at Cortland High School, and on a Board of Directors for the Cortland Housing Authority.

Elaine showed her love as a surrogate parent to many children through her teaching, and some of the young children she nurtured during her tenure at Head Start remained close to her through adulthood. Elaine baptized or confirmed eight children of friends and family and was a beloved godmother (NuNu) to Roseann Petronella, Linda Contento Schmidt, Polly Searles Madsen, Jamie Murphy, Paul Michael Contento, Mark Contento, David Victor Contento, and Chris Carriero. She was also a "foster" parent to two children from The Philippines (Jomelle & Joselle Almayda Rada) via donations through the Save the Children Foundation. Elaine's love of animals was evidenced by her loving dedication to her own pets, her bird feeders, and contributions to animal charities. Her love of nature could be seen in the beauty of her wonderful garden, kept in honor of her father. Elaine had a deep love of family and was the Contento family historian, keeping the photo albums and scrapbooks current for the annual Contento-Recchio family reunion. She was very proud of her family and her Italian heritage. Elaine loved to travel and was fortunate to explore The Panama Canal, Hawaii, Columbia, Costa Rica, Mexico, The Cayman Islands, Nova Scotia, the Caribbean, and Italy. Her love

of knowledge was also apparent as Elaine was an avid reader and informed conversationalist.

Elaine was a woman of great faith and was a dedicated participant of St. Anthony's Catholic Church. She was a Eucharistic minister offering holy communion in homes and hospitals to those who were unable to attend church. She helped with the annual St. Anthony's festival and was a member of various church committees for as long as her health allowed. Her faith guided her through all the trials in her life.

Elaine was predeceased by her parents, Rose (Carreiro) and Victor Contento, her brother Peter, and several cherished pets. She is survived by her sister-in-law Cheryl Contento; nephew Paul (Liz) Contento; niece Carrie Contento (Brandon Rew); and great-nephew Dorian Contento, as well as several cousins and close friends.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Friday at 11 a.m. at St. Anthony's Church, 50 Pomeroy Street, Cortland, NY. Prayers of committal and burial will follow in St. Mary's Cemetery, Cortland. A luncheon will take place in St. Anthony's Church hall following the burial, from 1-3 p.m. The family will receive friends from 9 a.m.-10:45 a.m. prior to Mass in St. Anthony'Church Although Elaine loved flowers, she asks that in lieu of flowers that you consider paying it forward with random acts of kindness or with a contribution in her memory to the Cortland ASPCA (879 McLean Rd, Cortland, NY 13045) or Central NY Spay Neuter Assistance Program (CNY SNAP, 17 Salisbury Street, Cortland, NY 13045).

Just one more thing... Elaine wished to express her love and gratitude for her family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, caregivers, and pets who enriched her life or helped her in times of need. Those we love are never truly gone for they live on in our hearts and memories. Elaine's life made our world a better

place. May we all learn from her shining example of faith, generosity, service, and love and continue to sow kindness in her memory.

Arrangements are under the direction of Riccardi Funeral Home, Cortland, N.Y.

[www.riccardifuneralhome.com](http://www.riccardifuneralhome.com)

# Tribute Wall

AP

“ *My condolences to Elaine's family - this beautiful woman was a truly genuine person. She was a total picture of what a good friend should be. Loved her Angie Partigianoni*

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**angie partigianoni** - January 28, 2023 at 10:17 PM

TF

“ *We send our deepest sympathies to the family of Elaine Contento-- a wonderful wonderful lady of deep faith and a huge love or our community...and an inspiration to us all. For many years she sat directly behind us at mass at St. Anthony's. She was quick with a smile and a hug, and an understanding look when our 3 kids were younger and sometimes restless during mass. May she rest in peace. -Kevin and Sheila Ossit (Zack, Nathan and Maggie)*

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**The Kevin Ossit Family** - January 13, 2023 at 08:29 AM



Christine Carriero

“ *Elaine was my cousin and a wonderful, caring person. We shared a love of animals and plants and she was one of the most interesting people I have ever known. No matter how long it had been since I had talked to her she was always happy to hear from me. I will miss her love, her spirit and her beautiful smile.*

*Cousin Chris*

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**Christine Carriero** - January 12, 2023 at 10:59 PM

RN

“ Elaine was my most cherished neighbor of 26years. She was an honorary member of our family - and a “bonus grandma” for both of my kids. We loved visits with her especially the ones where we sat on a bench admiring her beautiful gardens. She will be missed ❤️

Robin Nauseef-Cataldo - January 11, 2023 at 09:43 PM

MG

ELAINE and I were friends since 1984 when we both attended an Early Childhood Conference in Albany. We spent time taking daily trips to see nature like Sapsucker Woods, Lime Hallow Nature Center and the Labardor Bog in Tully. I enjoyed visiting Elaine in her backyard gardens so full of flowers, trees and other greenery, with benches to sit on. I served on the CAPCO Headstart Board while she was director. She loved interacting with Headstart parents who also served on the board. She loved serving the community through this program even though she would have made more money as a public school teacher. Her dedication and service came from her true ability to love people and embrace service, Elaine's true personality came out when she was able to help others; family friends, neighbors. Her joy for life and the ability to seek out the best for those around her is a gift so needed in the world today. Elaine's legacy will continue on because she was love, joy and peace. Blessings my best friend. God is love. Jesus loves you. The Holy Spirit has received you.

Mary K. GUY - January 12, 2023 at 12:23 PM

MG

Last posting was from Mary K. GUY

Mary K. GUY - January 12, 2023 at 12:25 PM

MG

“ Mary K. GUY lit a candle in memory of Miss Elaine M. Contento



Mary K. GUY - January 11, 2023 at 02:24 PM

NP

“ I have had the privilege and honor to spend the last two years caring for Elaine at home. She was kind, loving, and always concerned about the well being of those she loved and the world around her. She was my first home health care patient, we fell in love with one another the first day I cared for her. She was so easy to love. She loved when I cooked for her, especially making dishes that were things her mother made and the macaroni salad she'd ask for regularly. She loved when we went for rides to look at all the gardens and flowers. She loved sending greeting cards we wrote together to all of the people in her heart and on her mind. She loved my daughter too, always eager to have a child in her home. She had such a great joy for life and hope in humanity that I identify with very much. I was always so amazed by Elaine when thinking of how many people and lives she's touched and helped in all of her years on this earth. I will miss our morning talks at her bedside, listening to her many stories, and the friendship that she said and I felt more like family. My heart grieves yet has much gratitude for our time together. I will always hold her close to my heart and remember how much she did for me because of who she was. She was a a great love in my life, and I will cherish all the laughter, lessons, and special moments. Thank you Elaine for all the gifts you have shared with me and so many more. I love you and I'll miss you always.



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**Natalie Potter** - January 11, 2023 at 10:22 AM

KR

*Such a nice tribute, Natalie!*

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**Katha Root** - January 12, 2023 at 09:16 PM

LS

*Thank you for being there for her. She loved you as well. <3*

**Linda (Contento) Schmidt** - January 18, 2023 at 09:48 PM

PA

“ *My Aunt was always a fixture in my life, I remember spending many happy moments and staying over at her house as a kid. Into adulthood she always wanted to know what was happening and I was happy to tell her. In particular she enjoying visiting and hearing about our animals in psrticular our cats. It won't be the same not seeing her at any family event we will miss you Nu Nu*

**PaulContento** - January 10, 2023 at 04:09 PM

MC

*My memories of Elaine all consist of a beauties, and sincere smile and attentive conversation. She is part of my childhood neighborhood. In later years we often met in the summer at the cemetery where we each we're watering flowers planted at our family's graves. Her goodness has nurtured me. RIP dear Elaine.*

**Maria DiPietro Curry** - January 11, 2023 at 09:36 AM

RP

“ *Roseann P Petronella lit a candle in memory of Miss Elaine M. Contento*



**Roseann P Petronella** - January 10, 2023 at 03:12 PM

RP

“*Elaine was my cousin, my godmother, and my friend. She is part of me and I am heartbroken for me but I know she is in heaven and now at peace. She was an extraordinary woman and one of a kind. She led an incredible life. She was kind, selfless, giving, loving, and just a good wonderful person. She helped so many people and will be remembered forever. I will miss her every day and I pray that she will watch over me and my family. I love you Elaine, forever and always. I will miss our daily calls and I am so grateful that I got to talk to you one last time on Saturday and the last words we said to each other was "I love you". Rest in peace.*

*Roseann*



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**Roseann P Petronella** - January 10, 2023 at 03:09 PM

SV

*Elaine was my cousin and my friend. We were close! She sent Angels to my granddaughter and now she is an Angel herself. Elaine, I will miss our phone chats. I love and miss you so much.*

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**sharon veno** - January 10, 2023 at 07:15 PM

RP

*I had the privilege of working with Elaine at the Head Start program. She was always generous, kind, and had a heart of gold. She loved her family and always saying sweet things about her niece and nephew. She will be missed and I will always think of her.*

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**Rina Segneri Powell** - January 10, 2023 at 09:09 PM

TM

*I did not know Elaine personally, but I know many of the other Contento family members. Sending heartfelt condolences to all in your time of sorrow.*

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**Terry Mingle** - January 10, 2023 at 10:47 PM