

## Meet the 2021 CEF Honored Alumna, Mrs. Sandra Wanzer



Sandra Wanzer was born in Canada, moved to Grand Rapids at the age of 5 and then Caledonia in 1976 when she was 12 years old. Her family decided to move to the country and that small town feel has kept her here ever since. She attended Caledonia Junior High and High School where she was very active in sports including

softball, volleyball, and basketball. Sports provided connections and friendships for her. A former teammate and friend, Jodi Byers recalls, "Wanz was so much fun to be around. She could make anyone laugh!" Sports also taught her leadership skills and built up her confidence. Sandra also admired many of her high school teachers including Miss Lamb, Miss Van, and Mrs. Compton.

After graduating in 1982, Sandra attended Grand Rapids Community College, a culinary program through Hilton Hotels and Aquinas College. Sandra worked for her parents who opened up a restaurant in 1985. Over the years, it expanded to include a catering company and Sandra eventually bought them out. Today, the Nighthawk is a well established bar and restaurant in this community. Sandra comments, "I always wanted a place where everyone felt comfortable coming in alone, with family, or with friends. I wanted to have fair prices, good food, and a place where we know our



*Sandra posing with her volunteers who helped with the Wicked on Whitneyville fundraiser held at the Nighthawk*



*Recognizing Sandra for all her work on organizing the recent Wicked on Whitneyville fundraiser benefiting Spectrum Health Hospice and Gilda's*

customers names." For that reason, Sandra's focus is relationships and she thrives on friendships with her customers and staff. Her character makes her stand out as a business owner and a boss. Sandra received a special tribute from the State of Michigan recognizing her 30+ years of being in business.

Sandra's heart for others shows in her passion to raise money for the cause of cancer. Her mother died of cancer in 2009 and Spectrum Health Hospice greatly helped her and her family through that journey. In honor of her mother, she organized an annual chili cook off to benefit Spectrum Health Hospice. To date, she has raised over a quarter of a million dollars! "To know how much this has helped with the programs they offer patients and families means the world to me," Sandra humbly admits. In addition, Sandra provides meals for Gilda's Clubs and people in need when faced with illness or surgery. When asked why she does this, she replies, "Simple-I love helping people! Sometimes a meal brought to someone who is going through treatment and a visit is worth a lot to them!" A kind, caring heart that reaches out to touch and help others motivates Sandra to take care of her community.

Sandra was chosen as the 2021 Caledonia High School Honored Alumna for her work and service in the community. She was honored on Sept. 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm at the CALAPALOOZA, the Caledonia Education Foundation's largest fundraiser of the year.

Visit Sandra at her restaurant, The Nighthawk.