Memorial to Professor Susan Hershberger

Susan Hershberger graduated from Marquette University in 1974 and earned her PhD in Organic Chemistry from Iowa State University in 1980. In 1984, Susan moved to Oxford with her husband James (Jim) Hershberger and built a multifaceted career in as a talented teacher of organic chemistry and as an innovative researcher in chemistry education.

She taught general and organic chemistry courses in Oxford and at the Regional campuses of Miami University. Susan's enthusiasm for chemistry kept her classroom lively and engaged. She was committed to helping every student learn the material, and often spent hours with individual students. Her one-semester organic chemistry class had a reputation for being challenging, interesting, and good preparation for chemistry-adjacent careers.

Susan worked with Terrific Science and the Center for Chemistry Education at Miami, to develop educational materials and to lead professional development courses for K-12 science teachers throughout southwest Ohio. She led programs at schools and during the summer at Miami in the 1990s. Her work as director of the Center for Chemistry Education in the 2010s was supported by funding from the National Science Foundation and National Institute of Health. She led projects for the Improving Teacher Quality program with support from the Ohio Board of Education. As she approached retirement, she became interested in how narrative writing could enhance citizen understanding of science. Her innovative 2019-2023 project to bring science to under-resourced neighborhoods in Cincinnati was supported by over $450,000 in NIH funding. Susan passionately believed that "…bringing together STEM concepts in the form of a story increases their palatability and makes them more meaningful…. [so that] community members identify important underlying associations and get to the root causes of complicated issues relevant to their communities."

Susan was a committed member of the American Chemical Society, serving the Cincinnati Section and the greater organization in a variety of ways for almost forty years. She was Chair of the Section from 2009-2010, followed by leadership roles as a Councilor and a Trustee. She participated in the Nominating Committee and took a particularly active role in helping to select the Section Awardees, including putting forward her faculty and staff colleagues for "Chemist of the Year" awards when appropriate.

Susan was an enthusiastic chemistry demonstrator. She provided demonstrations for educators and students at ACS Section meetings. She often spent her weekends engaging people at museums and public libraries. Her passion for chemistry was not confined to the professional sphere. A grandchild's birthday was the perfect opportunity for a science party.

Susan was the mother of Margaret (Stefan) Kilyanek and Monica (Dan Tramte) Hershberger; grandmother of Helena Kilyanek and Anton Tramte. Her husband, also in a Faculty member in Chemistry & Biochemistry at Miami, died in 2011.

In 2011, Susan established a scholarship for students in Chemistry and Biochemistry at Miami University. Donations to the fund can be sent to the Miami University Foundation c/o the James and Susan Hershberger Memorial Fund 4174-001, 725 E. Chestnut Street, Oxford OH 45056.

A funeral mass will be held at St. Mary Church, 111 E. High Street, Oxford, OH at 10 AM on Friday, May 22, 2026. A light reception will follow the service. All are welcome.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann E. Hagerman