



## Nila I. Dreger

December 30, 1918 - November 5, 2005

Dreger, Nila I. passed away November 5, 2005. Born in Ionia, Michigan to Fred and Bessie (nee Thayer) Bluemly, December 30, 1918, she attended Ypsilanti Teacher's College and Lansing Business University. She was employed by Oldsmobile and AC Spark Plug until after WWII, when her husband R. Wayne returned from overseas. Inspired by a spirit of community involvement and desire to invest in others, Nila spent her lifetime giving back to the communities in which she lived. She had the ability to see a community need and organize a response. Residing with her young family in Grand Rapids, she became an active member of East Congregational Church, as well as a Girl Scout leader. In 1957 she was chosen to be Mrs. Michigan, which included a year of responsibilities as Michigan's representative. Her interest in community activities continued to grow and when the family moved to Charlotte, she became the first woman to sit on the United Way's board of directors. In addition, she earned her realtor's license, co-chaired Charlotte's Centennial celebration, organized a strong Girl Scout program, was an active member in First Congregational Church, and became involved in local politics. While in Arlington Heights, Illinois she volunteered for Meals on Wheels and taught in the Head Start program. In Covington, Virginia, she established a Meals on Wheels program, as well as a hospital volunteer program. After returning to Grand Rapids in the early 1970's, Nila worked as a volunteer with the Women's Resource Center and served for a number of years on its advisory council. In 1973 she established

and ran the volunteer program at Kent Oaks Hospital and was named Volunteer of the Year in 1975. Nila helped establish the Widowed Person's Service in 1977 and continued to work closely with the Women's Resource Center; in 1979 she became the workshop facilitator for the Displaced Homemaker program. Again responding to a need, in 1985 she helped establish the Older Women's League (OWL), a political activist group. In addition she traveled extensively, was an expert seamstress, and devoted wife, mother, and grandmother. Nila was preceded in death by her husband, R. Wayne; a daughter, Gigi "Kelly" Carmen and is survived by daughters Diane (Greg) Penix of Grand Ledge and Candice (Ron) Roeder of Delton; grandchildren Mitzi (Pentti) Tofte, Heidi Penix, Chris Carmen, Jeremy and Jon DeRuiter, and great grandson Kai Carmen. A memorial service will held 2:00 pm Saturday, November 26, 2005 at Holihan-Atkin Funeral Home, Grand Ledge with The Reverend J. Alan Leach officiating. A committal will take place at Chapel Hill Memorial Gardens, Grand Rapids. Memorial Contributions may be given to Alzheimer's Association, 225 N. Michigan Ave. 17th Floor, Chicago, Illinois 60601.