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A determined Margie Montgomery has been defending the sanctity of human life for 50 years

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In 1970, a gentleman named Bob Schulman occasionally appeared during the late evening news on WHAS-TV to read on-air editorials (“One Man’s Opinion”). Wearing his trademark bow tie, he looked and spoke like a college professor. One night, he said it was time to liberalize the abortion laws in this country, to remove the legal restrictions that had made this medical procedure a criminal offense.

Watching at home that evening was a 37-year-old wife, mother, civic volunteer, Rosemont College graduate and former city editor of the Irvington (New Jersey) Herald newspaper, Margaret Anne “Margie” Montgomery. Alarmed, the then-president of the League of Catholic PTA called the station the next morning and was cordially invited by Mr. Schulman himself to give a response.

After she gave the first of what became thousands of public, passionate addresses defending the sanctity of all human life, her telephone rang for a week — some were complete strangers but all agreed with Mrs. Montgomery

that “something had to be done.”

Right there in her kitchen, a national, state and local Right-to-Life movement was born. (The “right to Life” is one of the “self-evident” unalienable rights proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence.) This Thursday evening, around 700 socially distanced people will gather at the Crowne Plaza hotel for the 47th annual “Celebration of Life” dinner that will also honor Margie Montgomery’s remarkable 50 years of service on behalf of the greatest civil rights cause in our beloved country since the abolition of slavery.

When the movement she began outgrew her house, in 1973, Mrs. Montgomery opened a full-time operation in St. Matthews, where she still today, from a tiny and cramped corner office in a nondescript office building, oversees the state’s lobbying efforts in Frankfort and Washington, D.C., runs an annual statewide convention, organizes the annual anti-abortion rallies in Frankfort and downtown Louisville on the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the pernicious Supreme Court decision that legalized the killing of our pre-born sisters and brothers, coordinates a double full-page ad in this newspaper on that anniversary with thousands of names of Louisvillians, organizes the yearly dinner with a national figure giving a keynote address, presides over the annual Walk for Life up and down Shelbyville Road, quarterback a political action committee that strives to elect anti-abortion candidates to public office (people like her that will “do something”), and

still appears at every school and civic group that will have her to give one of her “talks,” the central theme of which is “abortion stops a beating heart.”

Now into the sixth decade of her vocation, this soft-spoken but determined woman has been the Gold Star Mother who won't let America ever forget the staggering human toll of this heretofore unknown constitutional “right:” the 61,628,584 babies' lives “terminated” (through 2017). She is still Kentucky's first responder whenever and wherever human life is threatened, the full-throated voice for those who have no voice.

She didn't hesitate to use that voice when she confronted the very man who wrote the infamous Roe decision: Justice Harry Blackmun. When the University of Louisville law school favored Mr. Blackmun in 1983 with its Brandeis Medal, Mrs. Montgomery was in attendance.

When it was her turn in the receiving line, as he extended his hand, she asked, “How can you sleep at night knowing how many lives have been lost because of your terrible decision?” The associate justice of the United States Supreme Court audibly gasped and, as he withdrew his hand, Mrs. Montgomery quietly said, “I will pray for you.”

Thanks to those efforts, and those of thousands of volunteer women and men from all over this commonwealth, Kentucky can fairly be called America's most anti-abortion state with an overwhelmingly anti-

abortion congressional delegation and state legislature.

Elections have consequences, some good. Pre-natal killings in our state have declined from a high of 11,000 a year to “only” 3,000. Legislation Mrs. Montgomery advocated, the “Choose Life” license plates, finances more than 50 crisis pregnancy centers in Kentucky that, if only a woman will assent to let her baby live, she will be sheltered, protected, nurtured and financially supported. (As of 2017, there are 2,752 of these life-affirming centers throughout the country.)

This, then, is Margie Montgomery’s most inspiring legacy: Her unwavering commitment to preserve, protect and defend all human life has directly led to an untold and unknown number of human lives being saved by women in crisis who got a timely word of encouragement and support, looked at a leaflet, spotted a billboard message, read an ad in a church bulletin, called a crisis hotline, saw their unborn baby move on a sonogram or ultrasound and blessed God’s creation by giving humanity one more life to marvel at, appreciate, love and cherish. Those saved people walk among us every single day. As the Talmud says (paraphrasing): “(S)he who saves a life, saves the entire world.”

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