Marlena Richards-Cox (BSSW ’74) was a woman with a lifelong passion for The Ohio State University. She was even more passionate about helping others and had provided her community with decades of social work service when she passed away in 2007.

Her husband, John Cox (pictured here with Marlena), said that she loved school. “She loved the energy, and being around people and friends,” he said, “High Street in the ’70s was exciting and she got to see Woody Hayes coach.”

Jennifer Batliner became friends with Marlena when they were freshman roommates at Ohio State. Their close relationship lasted until Marlena died in September, 2007. Batliner still speaks fondly of her college roommate. She recalled a time when she was ill as a student and Marlena came to take care of her; and another fond memory of when Marlena took a job as a census coordinator just to go door to door and reach people.

Marlena’s was, “… an honest friendship,” Batliner said. “She put others’ needs before her own.”

It was that awareness of the needs of others that led Marlena to her career in geriatric social work with Butler County (Ohio) Jobs and Family Services. Even after retiring from her position as director of social services, she went back to work as a case manager.

Cox also said of his wife, “She taught me that there are many people to love and help in the world.”

Loving and helping others led him to establish the The Marlena Kay Richards-Cox Endowed Scholarship in her memory. This fund provides scholarship support for an undergraduate or graduate student in the College of Social Work who intends to pursue a career in the area of gerontological social work.

Cox created the fund to help future social workers further ideas that mattered to Marlena. “I think she would tell our students to help, support, and listen to the older generation,” he said. “She would want students to ask themselves where they would be without the sacrifice of their elders.”

Batliner also shared thoughts on what Marlena would want to share with today’s students. Batliner thought that her friend, with her focus on older adults, would advise students to, “Be idealistic and keep a youthful outlook. Life will make you cynical only if you let it.”