

Organist to leave legacy

Money sought for new organ, recital room at St. Paul's in SJ

By LOUISE WREGG
HP Staff Writer

ST. JOSEPH — Music has always been his passion, especially playing the organ, said Philip Peter of Bridgman.

Now, at the end of his life, he wants to leave behind a legacy that the greater Southwest Michigan will benefit from, said Peter, 79, who was recently diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor.

He and his wife, Marina Peter, are raising money to buy a new organ for St.



PETER

Paul's Episcopal Church in St. Joseph. He said the Allen Organ Co. in Macungie, Pa., is assembling a recital organ, which will cost almost \$90,000.

In addition, he said he is donating his personal organ, which is worth \$30,000, to the church to be used in a practice room. He said he is donating musical scores and reference material to the practice room.

The Rev. Dennis Remenschneider, interim priest at St. Paul's, said the church is creating an Organ Task Force to work with the Allen Organ Co. and to set up the practice room.

Contributions can be mailed to St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 914 Lane Drive, St. Joseph, MI

49085. Checks should be made out to the church with "Philip Peter Memorial Organ Fund" in the memo line.

"We are very grateful to Dr. Peter for his contributions to the fund," Remenschneider said. "It is a marvelous gift."

Peter said he has been playing the organ ever since he can remember and started playing for church services when he was 13. He retired in 1993 as an associate professor of music and humanities at the University of Michigan-Dearborn after teaching there for almost 20 years. He received his doctorate degree in music from Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., in 1972.

"He's quite an accomplished musician," Remenschneider said. "He's supported so many students over the years. He has quite a legacy."

Peter said his greatest accomplishment has been mentoring Nick Quardokus, a 2012 graduate of Bridgman High School.

"He began studying with me when he was in high school, and he's a phenomenon," Peter said.

Quardokus is a junior at Indiana University in Bloomington, Ind., majoring in organ performance. He received a full scholarship from the Jacobs School of Music at the university.

"He (Peter) was really one of the most important musical figures in my life

when I was in high school," Quardokus said. "So much of who I am today is because of him."

Peter said Quardokus recently won first prize in the college/young professional division of the Albert Schweitzer Organ Festival in Wethersfield, Conn., a national competition for young organ students. He also won the Most Creative Hymn Playing award at the festival.

He said he believes Quardokus will go on to achieve national if not international fame.

Quardokus said he couldn't have done it without Peter.

"He didn't just teach me to be an organist," he said. "He taught me how to be a

musician."

When asked if organ music is out of date in most churches, Peter said, "Baldoney."

He said the organ is the most versatile musical instrument.

"We are now having a return to more traditional music," he said.

Marina Peter said her husband always sought to incorporate modern music into his organ performances.

"He was always pushing the envelope, and everybody loved it," she said.

Peter said he has been a member of the Twin Cities Organ Concert Series for the past 10-15 years.

Contact: lwregg@TheHP.com, 932-0361, Twitter: @HPWregg