

Forest of Friendship honoree dies prior to ceremonies

(KAIR)--This weekend marks the 46th annual celebration of the International Forest of Friendship. However, a somber tone is set for the Atchison celebration as honoree Kathy Carrigan died prior to the start of ceremonies.

Kathy, and her husband, Pat, were long involved with the Forest, with Pat's father, Joe, having been heavily involved until the time of his death in 1996.

That's when Pat took on increasing roles, becoming International Forest of Friendship co-Chair in 2003. A release calls Kathy Carrigan's contributions to the Forest "essential," saying that she worked on organizing the Forest's annual ceremony, participated actively in office operations, and "was vigilant with the finances as the Forest's treasurer." Pat Carrigan died in January, 2022, with Kathy then stepping back from active involvement. She died Wednesday at the age of 78.

Both she and Pat were named as honorees for the weekend ceremonies prior to her death.

Kathy will be laid to rest Monday, with a Mass of Christian Burial beginning that morning at 11:00 at Saint Benedict's Catholic Church.

The International Forest of Friendship was presented in 1976 as a gift to America on the nation's 200th birthday. The gift came through the City of Atchison, the birthplace home of famed aviator Amelia Earhart, the Ninety-Nines, and Kansas State University's Kansas Forest Service.

The annual celebration at the Forest will take place Saturday morning, with the local children-led Parade of Flags at 9:45, followed by the honoring of the Carrigans and the induction of new honorees at 10:00. This year, the parade will be led by the flag of Jamaica, the newest flag in the Forest, with Jamaica joining the 35 other countries represented in the Forest.