

# Coleman: A name to be proud of



The true foundation of Coleman Professional Services was built upon the values and practices of Father Kevin Coleman, a priest, mentor and friend. Fr. Coleman touched many lives in our local community during his lifetime. Although his life on Earth was cut short in 1973, at the age of 42, from complications with internal hemorrhaging, Fr. Coleman's lasting legacy and spirit of generosity for reaching out

to anyone and everyone is alive more than ever through the mental and behavioral health services provided by Coleman Professional Services.

Fr. Coleman wore an array hats in his lifetime in several diverse capacities. During his career, he utilized his background in mental health, serving as a consultant and instructor for the U.S. Air Force and numerous private and public hospitals throughout the country. He was a research pioneer in the field of death and dying, in which his work was nationally recognized. Kevin worked at the Metropolitan General Hospital in Cleveland to develop a program for physicians and nurses to help hospitalized children and their families deal more effectively with the anxiety and fear accompanying hospitalization and surgery.

According to friend and co-worker, Jean Phillips, "Many people were unaware Kevin was also a Catholic priest at St. Patrick's Parish in Kent." Ordained a priest in 1958 in Youngstown, Fr. Coleman came to St. Patrick's in 1966, where his interest in mental health was sparked by both family background and religious training. His family instilled in him a deep faith in God and a belief that his best "job" in life was to be of service to others. He was also instrumental in working to turn the former St. Patrick's convent over for use for mental health services.

Serving as a teacher and counselor for both students and adults in the Kent State University Group Resources & Counseling Center, Fr. Coleman was able to touch many lives of his peers and colleagues through his outgoing, humorous and humanitarian personality. Co-worker and friend, Dr. Sue Hetrick said Fr. Coleman was a great mentor to her. "Kevin had a very healthy and fun attitude. He taught me how important it is to live a full life and give to others. People were always drawn to his charismatic personality, and he was always willing to offer free counseling services. I think today he would be amazed at the services offered in the community and the availability of services to the general public through his namesake organization," Hetrick said. Co-worker, Dr. Dick Rynearson agreed and explained how he was able to learn from Fr. Coleman, who served as a role model to him as a young professional. "Kevin was very good at handling crises. Though

he often met with very difficult patients, he was very skilled in working with them. He talked many students out of suicide. I didn't know anyone who didn't like or respect him."

In 1970, Fr. Coleman studied as a doctoral graduate student in Counseling Psychology in the School of Education at Kent State. When he unexpectedly died three years later, the University awarded his Ph.D. posthumously. Dr. Arvin Lubetkin, Fr. Coleman's supervisor in counseling services said Fr. Coleman's selflessness was exhibited during his time of illness. "Even through Kevin's time of pain and illness, he always kept the focus on helping others. He never let his own suffering get in the way of his services to the community. He kept his pain inside," Lubetkin said.

In 1978, The Kevin Coleman Mental Health Center was named in his honor to remember all he accomplished during his distinguished lifetime. The center was established by community leaders who saw the need for expanded and centralized mental health services in Portage County. It was also founded to provide community-based services for local citizens who were being discharged in large numbers from the state psychiatric hospitals. In 1996, the center was renamed Coleman Professional Services.

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Fr. Coleman will be most remembered by his friends and family as a man of God who would have helped anyone, laughed often and loved life. Philips said, "Coleman's services embody Kevin's qualities, goals and attitudes toward people." Friend of Fr. Coleman and Board Member of Coleman Foundation, Tammy Rynearson, said, "Kevin did not discriminate against anyone, and there were no barriers between him and the public. Coleman Professional Services exists today as a magnification of what Kevin would have done in his lifetime."

Dennis Missimi, who often entertained Fr. Coleman and others at his family's home, agreed. "Though Kevin would have been slightly discomforted by the recognition, he would be proud Coleman Professional Services is serving others the way he would have served them, specifically seeing each person as an individual first and part of a community second. A lot of people are around today who wouldn't be if Kevin wasn't there for them."

Coleman Professional Services is a nationally recognized not-for-profit provider of behavioral health and rehabilitation programs that improve the lives of individuals, families and businesses in Northeast Ohio. The company relies on an enterprise business model to diversify its funding. Coleman's foundation and four enterprise companies produce more than 40 percent of the company's funding for its award-winning programs.



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