

OTTAWA HIGH SCHOOL HALL OF FAME

2017



CHRISTINE L. SIPULA

Class of 1971



Christine (Tina) Sipula received her bachelor's degree from Illinois State University, majoring in English and Sociology. She taught school for a year before planning and establishing Clare House in the fall of 1978 in Bloomington, Illinois. The house served as a refuge for women fleeing domestic abuse, and at the time was the only such facility in the Bloomington-Normal community. In 1981, one of the abusers soaked the back stairs of the building in the middle of the night and set Clare House on fire. All occupants survived and the house was later repaired and reopened. Eventually Clare House transitioned to a refuge for homeless women and their children, then expanded to become a food pantry. Separately Ms. Sipula opened the Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen which has continued in operation. For more than 25 years, a weekly average of 120 to 150 bags of food passed through the doors of Clare House bringing nourishment and hope to individuals and families in need. The Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen has provided from 120 to 160 meals each week during its existence. In 2002 the YWCA named Tina Sipula a "Woman of Distinction – Social Services." Illinois State University honored her in 2014 with the Grabill-Homan Award for Community Service. The Normal Rotary Club presented her with the Jack G. Wilz Public Health and Safety Award in 2014. Upon her retirement and the closing of Clare House in November 2015, the Bloomington City Council proclaimed "Tina Sipula Day" honoring her contributions to community health and well being.