

Brother honors late sister with new school

BY KARIE ANGELL LUC | Contributor

Evanston roots run deeply for Mike Nekritz, the co-founder of Felicity School in Deerfield.

Northwestern University gave the former Evanston resident, who now lives in Northbrook, the opportunity to meet his wife Diane, a Highland Park speech language pathologist.

The Joy of the Game basketball training center, 158 S. Waukegan Road, is also home to Felicity School, which was accredited March 13 by the Illinois State Board of Education.

The school honors Nekritz's sister Felicia Beth Nekritz, an Ohio public defender, who died in Sept. 1998 from breast cancer. Starting Aug. 14, about 15 students will be welcomed. Up to 60 students can be accommodated.

Nekritz's older brother Ed lives in Denver. His in-laws, Neil and Judy Adelman are from Wilmette. Mike and Diane Nekritz have two daughters, Alyssa, 12, and Erica, 8.

He turned his B.A. in history and political science, a master's in education and MBA from Kellogg into a career as District 117 superintendent and principal at Antioch High School. At Niles North High School he served 12 years as dean, teacher and basketball coach.

His mother Susan is a Northbrook realtor. His father Barry Nekritz, a real estate attorney, is married to state Rep. Elaine Nekritz.

The first Opening Gala "Think Big, Dream Big" is Friday, June 14. For donations



Mike Nekritz credits his Evanston roots with helping to give him the basis to start Felicity School in Deerfield. | **KARIE ANGELL LUC**-for Sun-Times Media

or tickets, email mnekritz@felicityschool.com

Q. What is the mission of Felicity School?

A. Our mission is based on the fundamental belief that all students can achieve greatness and be successful in settings that accentuate their skills. Felicity School will be a premiere special education private therapeutic day school leveraging superior staff and facilities

to provide a curriculum and experience focused on the individual. Felicity School will create successful students and citizens with unique, relevant, and appropriate experiences. We will serve special needs students from grades 6-12. Area school districts will send us students who need an alternative setting, more attention/services, and focus on a different skill set.

Q. How does the school

speak to the North Shore?

A. Our principal, Ed O'Neill's daughter, teaches in the Glencoe elementary schools and Diana Wilson, an advisory board member, is an Evanston resident, NU graduate, and administrator in the Evanston elementary district. We are very much looking forward to providing educational services to the families and students from throughout the northern suburbs.

Q. Joy of the Game is a cool teen setting. What does a basketball symbolize to you?

A. I played and coached for years. Spent a lot of time on the basketball court. To me it was a place to escape, to have fun, to see life in an enjoyable way which is what we're trying to do for these kids.

Q. What was your sister Felicia Beth Nekritz like?

A. Felicity in Spanish means "joy." She believed that every person could achieve greatness. She was a friend, a writer, a lawyer, a wonderful person who believed in the beauty of life and that everyone had extreme value to provide. You know, she was my younger sister ... I look back, and she was probably a role model for me in many ways. She was a public defender when she became a lawyer and died way too young at the age of 27. My attempt is to create a legacy in her name about kids and special kids that need special support to make her proud.

Q. Would she be proud of you, her big brother?

A. Yes. She defended people that others wouldn't or couldn't. She spent her volunteer time to help research and defend teenagers that were on death row. She cared an awful lot about life and about the protection of others. She wanted to give people that chance. ■