

# ‘Beautiful turnout’ as St. Rose Philippine Duchesne joins Walk of Fame

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St. Rose Philippine Duchesne probably would have wondered what all the fuss was about, why so many good souls had gathered in her honor along Delmar Boulevard on the St. Louis side of the border with University City.

She neither would have expected nor sought recognition for her good works in helping shape St. Louis, let alone the honor bestowed upon her June 23, appropriately the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

"I'm not sure she would have been nearly as glad to have this happen as I am," said Sister Sheila Hammond, provincial leader of the United States-Canada Province of the Society of the Sacred Heart — St. Philippine Duchesne's religious community. "She was a very humble woman ... (and) a very courageous woman."

Sister Sheila was among more than 100 people crowding the sidewalk and overflowing onto Delmar as Joe Edwards, the unofficial mayor of the Delmar Loop, unveiled St. Philippine Duchesne's star on the St. Louis Walk of Fame. Born on Aug. 29, 1769, in Grenoble, France, and canonized by the Catholic Church in 1988, St. Philippine Duchesne is now honored among the icons of the city founded 254 years ago by Pierre Laclede and Auguste Chouteau. She is a patron saint of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

Her star is at 6241 Delmar, at the intersection with Eastgate Avenue, on the north side of Delmar. It's in front of United Provisions, whose customers navigated the saints' many fans and a lively ragtime band during the ceremony.

Sisters from the Society of Sacred Heart, alumni from area Sacred Heart schools — Academy of the Sacred Heart elementary school in St. Charles, Villa Duchesne High School in Frontenac, old City House high school and Maryville University — and many other Catholic St. Louisans came out for the ceremony.

"A beautiful turnout," said Edwards, adding that Walk-of-Fame induction crowds usually range from 10 to 60. "This is the most we've had in while."

Edwards, the owner of Blueberry Hill and the founder of the Walk of Fame in 1989, described St. Philippine Duchesne as "one of the greatest educators in St. Louis history." She also was among the first. In 1818, at age 48, Philippine Duchesne and four cohorts in the Society of the Sacred Heart traveled from France at the behest of Bishop William DuBourg and established the first school west of the Mississippi, in St. Charles, which became Missouri's first state capital.

"There's a lot of firsts on her list," said Sister Maureen Glavin, RSCJ, the head of Academy of Sacred Heart school. She named a few in addition to the St. Charles school. "First Sacred Heart school in North and South America, first Catholic school in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, the first to make Sacred Heart schools international."

Now, the first saint on the St. Louis Walk of Fame.

"She would not have counted anything she did as significant and important," Sister Glavin said. "All she wanted to do was to serve God."

But in humbly doing that service, she accomplished significant and important things.

"She did so much for the St. Louis area, kind of developed education here," said Dave Putman, who taught middle-school science at the Academy for the past four years. "It's pretty incredible."

T.J. Bauer, a Theology III student at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, called St. Philippine Duchesne "our best-kept secret in St. Louis. It's nice to see our Catholic culture honored, and there's no place better than right here. What a powerful influence she had here."

Her legacy lives on, with 24 schools in the United States-Canada province, schools in 30 countries worldwide, and Society of the Sacred Heart communities in 41 countries.

Barat Academy students, junior Emily Albers and sophomore Emily Barrett, agreed the Walk-of-Fame honor is "really cool." The reason is as simple as their school, which is named after Society of the Sacred Heart founder St. Sophie Barat.

"Sacred Heart is educating me," Albers said.

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