

## FEATURE

## Death of a friend inspires Genevan's goodwill

By Liza R. Mugnolo  
Editorial intern

GENEVA — Sally Ann Fratto began singing seriously when she was about 7 years old. She pretended she was Diana Ross while her two younger sisters provided backup vocals. They were The Supremes in the privacy of their home. Years later, Fratto started taking voice lessons from the well-known Finger Lakes opera singer, Norma Brown.

Today, her songs are raising money for the University of Rochester's Blood Research Fund. Last December, she released a compact disc titled "Ave Maria" as a tribute to her friend, Kim Hall, who died of leukemia in April 1999 at age 36.

"I sang the 'Ave Maria' at her funeral and it was very difficult," Fratto recalled, "but it came out extra special that day."

The CD consists of two operatic versions of "Ave Maria," sung a capella with harmony, orchestration and accompaniment added afterward. Fratto's sister, Shari Pitifer, who also produced a CD of her own, put Fratto in contact with professional musician Rino Minetti. The music was mixed, recorded and produced by Minetti at his independent studio in New York City.

Fratto's other sister, Sharla Pitifer, designed the CD's artwork. The CD cover photograph shows their mother, Ann Marie Pitifer, at her first Communion, while the inside jacket insert contains a photograph of her in her wedding gown. A wedding portrait of Fratto is on the back cover. The insert presents a lengthy poem written by Fratto in memory of her friend, Hall, who is also pictured. Also inside are nostalgic photographs of Fratto's grandmothers at their weddings. Fratto said her intention was to commemorate all mothers who have made a loving impact on their children's lives, including Hall, who left behind two young children.

The music legacy doesn't stop with the sisters. Fratto's late father, Sully Pitifer, played the organ and always encouraged Fratto to sing at family gatherings as a very young girl. Her brother, Mark Pitifer, stated, "Even when she was a little girl, you

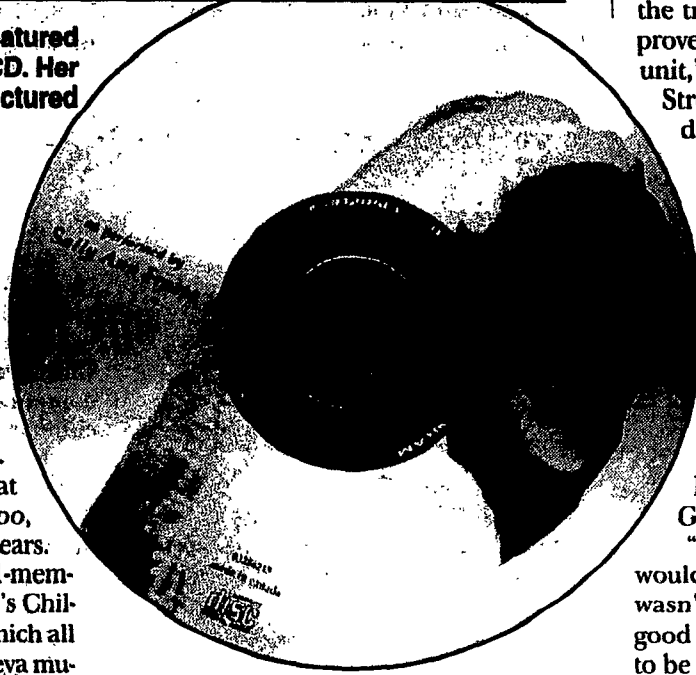


Ann Marie Pitifer, above, is featured on her daughter's fundraising CD. Her daughter, Sally Ann Fratto, is pictured on the compact disc itself.

could tell her voice was something special."

In turn, Fratto said she's become closer to God through her brother's influence. She attributes much of her spirituality to her brother's example and inspiration.

Mark is a guidance counselor at Lafayette Elementary in Waterloo, and has been writing music for 22 years. Some of it is performed by the 11-member Christian pop group, "All God's Children," which he founded, and in which all four siblings are involved. The Geneva mu-



sic group raises money toward special causes, including UR's Blood Research Fund.

Fratto's husband, Ralph "Rocky" Fratto, promotes his wife's work and is unabashedly proud.

"He's my greatest fan," Fratto said.

"When you do positive things, it's only a matter of time before positive things come out of it," Rocky said. A local lightweight boxing legend, he manages the business end of his wife's project.

"Ave Maria" was completed five days before last Christmas. In those five days, 150 CDs were sold. The CD price is \$10. Fratto said she gained tremendous recognition by appearing on the Geneva radio station, WFSW, on the "Italian Hour," where her CD was played by host Matt Fela.

Sales have raised about \$2,000 for blood research. Fratto said that a second issue of the CD is pending.

According to Wendy Silverman, public relations and marketing representative for the Blood and Marrow Transplant Program at Rochester's Strong Memorial Hospital, the CD proceeds went toward nursing and patient education, along with renovations for a family waiting room in the transplant area. These will help improve the quality of life for patients of the unit," Silverman said. Hall was treated at Strong throughout the duration of her disease.

Born and raised in the historic city of Geneva, Fratto shares her home with her husband and three sons, Raffaele, Mario and Frankie. The family belongs to St. Stephen's Parish.

The "Ave Maria" CD is available at the Ave Maria Shop, Martin Music, Area Records and Stacy's Sheer Design, all located in Geneva, and by contacting Sally Fratto directly at P.O. Box 255, Geneva, NY 14456.

"If I never did anything again, that would be the ultimate," Fratto says. "It wasn't about me, but it made me feel good in my heart that my friend was going to be remembered."

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