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Homicide victim's legacy of love remembered

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RACINE - Judy Koenig met Sandra Teichow in July outside Riverview Manor, 1403 W. Sixth St., just next to the woods where her body was found last week.

Teichow had walked up the driveway and approached Koenig, friendly and curious about the building. The two women talked about its history and gardening and Teichow asked for her number. They made plans to plant flowers together in the spring, another one of Teichow's "pet projects."

"I felt I made a friend," said Koenig, 64, of Racine, who brought a bouquet of flowers to Teichow's vigil Thursday.

From people who never met her but had heard of her kindness to those whose lives, like Koenig's, had been touched by Teichow's spark gathered Thursday to commemorate and keep alive the former teacher's legacy of love.

The crowd of almost 150 people gathered early for the Racine Interfaith Coalition's prayer vigil atop a hill next to where last week's homicide victim had been found.

The body of the 67-year-old Lake Geneva woman was found in a wooded area south of the intersection of West Sixth Street and Mound Avenue last Thursday. She had been strangled.

Wilbert Thomas, 65, 1004 Grand Ave., was charged Monday with first-degree intentional homicide, theft from person or corpse and two counts of felony bail jumping. If convicted, Thomas, a convicted sex offender, faces life in prison. He is being held on \$250,000 cash bond and is due in court Wednesday for a preliminary hearing.

Teichow died as she had lived: helping others. She spent the last hours of her life giving out \$100 in quarters to people at a laundromat.

In her honor, a humanitarian fund has been set up through the Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sharon she and her husband attended.

Dennis Teichow, husband of 11 years, said Sandra was the most wonderful woman he'd ever known.

"She had a zest for life," he said. "Everybody loved her."

Teichow was a woman who responded to the world's brokenness with kindness, said Rev. Ben Johnston-Krase, who called on the crowd to live as she had.

Several people who spoke at the vigil affirmed that Teichow's life would not be in vain and dedicated themselves to give and love as she had, as they sang, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine."