

# Regina Matrum honoree 'an amazing role model'

By Christine Bordelon  
Clarion Herald

"Home Sweet Home" is the sign that hangs on the Kenner home of Vivian Breaux, and her home and her family are definitely where her heart is.

A mother of 10, grandmother of 24 and great grandmother of 10, Breaux was named the 2008 Archdiocesan Regina Matrum award winner symbolic of outstanding Catholic motherhood.

"She is such a humble, quiet servant and an amazing role model for all mothers who face the joys and worries of motherhood," St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Regina Matrum committee member Michele Branigan said of Breaux. "She has had a taste of everything and still puts all in the hands of the Lord."

Breaux said she was stunned when members of the Regina Matrum committee from St. Elizabeth, her church parish, visited her 80th birthday party April 26 at the Kenner Pavilion.

## Surprised by award

When they began speaking about Regina Matrum, the award for outstanding Catholic motherhood given by the Council of Catholic School Cooperative Clubs, she thought they were con-

fused. She had been named that at the parish level in 2007. When she was presented with a bouquet of flowers and a proclamation, reality hit her.

"I was very surprised," Breaux said. "I don't think I deserve it."

But her children – A.J., Tim, Patsy, Joyce Muller, Charlene Mahner, Vivian Wroten, Debbie Williamson, Maureen Woodall, Lisa Davenport and Jane Cannella, think otherwise. And she did it without drinking, smoking or cursing, they said.

"She's wonderful," daughter Maureen Woodall said. "We always got what we needed. I have three (children), and she had 10. I can't ever imagine how they did it, and we all went to Catholic schools."

Breaux's answer to her has always been, "I prayed a lot."

## Believed in Catholic schools

Her children said Breaux is a loving person with a calm demeanor who sacrificed for them, especially when it came to Catholic education. All 10 of her children attended St. Christopher Elementary School in Metairie. Her two boys went to Archbishop Rummel High School, and her eight daughters went to Sacred Heart High School or



Photo | COURTESY BREAUX FAMILY

Regina Matrum honoree Vivian Breaux and members of her extended family at her 80th birthday party in April.

Seton Academy (when it was renamed).

"That was one of our priorities," Breaux said of her and her late husband Anthony "Chick" Breaux's decision to send their children to Catholic school. "It wasn't always easy, but we always thought that it was an important part to raising children."

She said bank loans helped finance the education as well as family vacations. In fact, a story her son, A.J. Breaux, 45, enjoys telling is how August Pfleger, the former bank president at Metairie Bank, valued her as a customer so much that he jokingly told her children, "I think she was responsible for the new wing at the bank."

## She's a marvel

A.J. marvels at how his mom raised so many children, considering his two keep him busy.

"When you become a parent, you think about how many she had," A.J. said. "I just think God takes certain people and says, 'I am going to make you a mother of more than two.'"

While her days of raising children – now ranging in age from Lisa at 41 to Patsy at 62 – are over, she can be counted on to watch sick grandchildren and attend extracurricular functions of her grandchildren and great

grandchildren.

And, her house is far from empty. Maureen, a great grandchild and her sister, Patricia Gautreaux, 78, live with her. With nine of her 10 children still living in the New Orleans area, Sunday dinners always pack the house.

Breaux was raised on Washington Avenue in the Garden District of New Orleans, and attended Mass and school at St. Mary's. She and her husband graduated from Redemptorist High, were married and she became a homemaker. She was one of two children but she ended up having 10.

"I didn't think about having that many," Breaux said. "I took them as they came."

## Family vacations fun

She wouldn't trade her days of having a large family for anything, though. They've had many wonderful times together on family vacations and at parades, two of her favorite activities.

"It was hectic and fun," she said.

Some of the funniest stories her children tell surround vacations. Once while visiting cousins in Atlanta, A.J. said the family was traveling in their famous converted school bus. Well, his dad couldn't get the bus up a steep hill to the relatives' home with the entire family onboard.

"So, everybody had to get out of the bus and climb the hill while my dad attempted to get the bus up the hill," A.J. said. "He barely did it."

The bus caravanned the family to Disneyworld, often with more than 10 children in tow.

"We went to Disney several times," Breaux said with her children and their friends. She recently went again with family members.

## Cancer survivor

Breaux continues to celebrate life as a breast cancer and a triple bypass survivor. She is active in the Bosom Buddies cancer survivors' group that walks annually in the Relay for Life event in Kenner. She's also survived the death, five years ago, of her beloved husband of 58 years.

"Marriage and family are the most things to me," Breaux said. "I had a great husband, the best in the world. I miss him so much. He always treated me great. He always put me first and was always great with the kids."

Archbishop Alfred Hughes will celebrate Mass in Breaux's honor May 12 at 7 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church. A reception will follow.

Christine Bordelon can be reached at [cbordelon@clarionherald.org](mailto:cbordelon@clarionherald.org).



Photo by Christine Bordelon | CLARION HERALD

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parishioner Vivian Breaux will be honored with the Regina Matrum award May 12.