



**Courtesy of Lisa A.M. Meredith-Unrath** | Clockwise from bottom are grandmother Mamie A. (Day) Zimmerman, mother Carol A. (Zimmerman) Meredith, and Lisa A.M. Meredith-Unrath, who made a donation in her mother Carol's memory.

## Reading native memorializes Mom, provides backpack bonanza

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By [Don Spatz](#)

Lisa A.M. Meredith-Unrath urgently wanted to make a \$5,000 donation to some Reading organization in memory of her mother who died in May, but she was uncertain about where her mother would have wanted the money to go.

A Reading native, Lisa, 45, discussed her quandary with her husband, Thomas, and with a friend.

"You'll figure it out," they said.

Her mother, Carol A. Zimmerman, was raised in Centerport, then met and married Robert L. Meredith, who grew up near Reading's Baer Park.

They lived at 12th and Oley streets and became highly involved in Reading - in the unions since he was a steelworker and she was a garment worker, in city politics, in the school system and in the city recreation programs.

Lisa remembers all the local playgrounds she played in and her jobs with the city recreation department and at the Reading stadium.

They didn't have much money, but they had a principle that Lisa said was instilled in her by her parents, grandparents and church: If you've got it but don't need it, and you can give to someone who does, that's what you do.

She remembers her mother buying back-to-school items for students whose families couldn't afford them.

After Lisa graduated from Reading High School in 1987 and went to Temple University in Philadelphia, Carol also went back to school, getting a nursing degree from Reading Area Community College.

Lisa married and taught school, first in Reading and then in Philadelphia.

She and Thomas finally decided last year to move back to Berks. But then her mother died, and Lisa had the quandary to answer. The answer came in a notice on Facebook from the Reading Recreation Commission, a city and school district joint venture. The flier

was advertising the commission's Back to School Bonanza, offering low-cost school supplies, haircuts and \$1 articles of clothing as well as fun, food and music.

For Lisa, it had everything - the city, the schools, recreation, the kids, and helping others.



**Reading Eagle: Susan Keen** | Natalie Cortez, 5, left, and her sister Tasha, 8, are among those waiting in line to have their faces painted at the Back to School Bonanza.

"Kids need to know there are people out there that care a bout them and believe in them," she said.

Money from Lisa's donation was used to buy extra backpacks for the event, said Daphne Klahr, the commission's executive director.

The donation also helped buy 11 new computers - nine of them to replace the really old and slow computers in the homework rooms at the 11th and Pike and the Third and Spruce recreation centers, she said.

"I think people see value in what we're doing," Klahr said. "I think they see it makes a difference."

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**Reading Eagle: Susan Keen** | Xiaver James, 11, of Reading was the winner of the basketball competition at the Back to School Bonanza.