This Tuesday, November 27, we celebrate Giving Tuesday, a global day of giving fueled by the power of social media and collaboration. And by YOU! As we prepare for Giving Tuesday, we wanted to share the story of someone we feel exemplifies the spirit of Giving Tuesday, and the mission of NAMI Texas, Mrs. Marium Schmerbeck.

Mrs. Schmerbeck was born on March 18, 1917 in Dallas. After graduating from Baylor University, she moved to Kerrville, Texas to begin her teaching career. She taught at Tivy High School and later at Schreiner College. In 1939, she married Garrett G. Schmerbeck and they made their home in Kerrville for 60 years until his death in 1999.

Marium was active in civic affairs, with a special interest in mental health, serving several years as a volunteer and Board Member for NAMI Kerrville. Her interest in mental health began when one of her twin sons was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia at age 14.

At 21 years old, the twins were participants in Dr. E. Fuller Torry’s groundbreaking National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Twin Study in 1987 in Washington, D.C. The study participants were identical twins, only one of whom suffered from schizophrenia. The twins’ participation led to a seminal book on schizophrenia by Dr. Torrey.

It was in this way that Marium was a pioneer mental health advocate, devoting a tremendous amount of time and energy to making sure her sons received the care they needed as well as fighting to make sure that families and individuals affected by mental health conditions had access to services. Mrs. Schmerbeck died on June 19, 2018 at the age of 101, but her legacy, and now her story, live on at NAMI Texas.

Each of us has our own reasons for supporting the work of NAMI Texas. We hope you will be as inspired by the work of Marium Schmerbeck as we are. We invite you to join us on this Giving Tuesday, and make a contribution to our mission of improving the quality of life of all individuals living with mental illness and their families.

Earlier this year, a donation in memory of Mrs. Schmerbeck was made to NAMI Texas by Thorpe McKenzie from the McKenzie Foundation. We are grateful that the donation inspired us to research the story behind the gift.