

THE *Community*
FOUNDATION
SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

The **Jennifer Thoma Memorial Ballet Scholarship** was

established in memory of Jennifer Armstrong Thoma, beloved wife and mother, who passed away on June 13, 2012 after a courageous battle with cancer. Jennifer was born in July 1955, grew up in the Montclair area of Oakland and was active in Girl Scouting through high school. She graduated early from Skyline High School and entered Cal Poly in the spring of 1973 where she earned a degree in Home Economics. She fell in love with Bill Thoma while she was a student, and the two were best friends from the start. Jennifer and Bill were married June 16, 1979. Their relationship was a powerful illustration of strength, love and partnership, and their devotion to each other carried them through Jennifer's devastating illness. In 1981 they returned to San Luis Obispo and Jennifer accepted a position in administration at her alma mater, Cal Poly. She gave birth to two children and while Jennifer continued to succeed professionally, family became the focus of her life.



In 2007, Jennifer retired after 25 years at Cal Poly, but she was soon back to work, having been recruited by IBM for her unique talents in information systems. For the next several years, she assisted with complex information-system implementation projects at California State University campuses including Monterey Bay, Stanislaus and Humboldt. The Humboldt project led her to a post with Oracle Corporation's higher-education division in New York City, which was a career pinnacle for Jennifer. She lived and worked weekdays in New York City,

where she was a pivotal team member on a 19-campus project at the City University of New York (CUNY). The arts lover was thrilled to be at the center of theater, dance and museums. She flew home every weekend to be with family and share stories of her Big Apple adventures.

She thrived in that position until September 2011, when she was diagnosed with cancer. During her valiant fight with cancer, Jennifer was inspired and encouraged by an outpouring of love and prayers. She treasured family, enjoyed entertaining and had a special fondness for her group of friends who gathered for 20 years to play Bunco. She was a consummate career professional and a devotee of the arts who dabbled with the cello and loved dance, a passion she shared with her daughter Jessica, an accomplished ballerina. She was a skilled seamstress and an avid reader; she had an infectious laugh and she reveled in nature and the outdoors.

The Jennifer Thoma Memorial Ballet Scholarship was established to help local dancers realize their own dreams by providing support for dancers to attend summer intensive training programs. Jennifer lived a productive life anchored by integrity and conviction. Above all, she was a selfless, caring person committed to quietly helping others. She touched lives in ways she never fully realized and will continue to do so into the future through this scholarship.