

NORTHAMPTON - Nearly four years after her death, Jean Elizabeth Hosmer's name will live on in the newly renovated second-floor art gallery at Forbes Library.

The Hosmer Gallery was formally dedicated at a ceremony Wednesday afternoon attended by Hosmer's parents and area philanthropist Mary Ann P. Cofrin, who donated the money for the gallery.

"It is with great joy and solemn gratitude that we, the Hosmer family, accept the dedication of this stunning gallery in our beloved daughter's name," said Hosmer's mother, Catherine Hosmer. "Jean's spirit is alive in this beautiful place."

Hosmer was shot and killed by her estranged husband, William Bernotas, on Center Street in front of the police station on the morning of Oct. 26, 1999. Bernotas then shot himself, and later died. Hosmer had just returned from renewing a restraining order against him, and the case raised widespread concern about domestic violence issues in the city.

In 2001, Cofrin, who had never met Hosmer but was moved by her story, donated \$25,000 to the library's Second Century Campaign to renovate the art gallery and rename it in Hosmer's honor. In all, Cofrin and her family donated \$200,000 for the library's renovation project.

On Wednesday, Cofrin was given the library's annual Trustees Award.

"I'm really honored and greatly pleased that Forbes has selected me for this honor," she said. "I really think this day is Jean's day. The inspiration for this gift is Jean, and I want to remember her."

Russell Carrier, president of the trustees, presented Cofrin with a photograph of the library as it looked many years ago and thanked her.

"That she chose to dedicate the gallery to Jean Hosmer is a sign of her humility and passion for the issues," he said. "She is an incredibly generous individual."

Naming the gallery for Hosmer is especially fitting, since she was a graphic artist. In addition to revolving monthly exhibits of local artists, the gallery features two examples of her artwork and five sculptures by her father, John Hosmer.

Catherine Hosmer said she was moved by the public concern about her daughter's death.

"In spite of all the dreadful tragedy, we still turn to this lovely area to sustain us," she said. "We feel right at home in this wonderful town."

Faith Kaufman, the library's art and music librarian, said that before the renovation, the gallery was much smaller and was lit only with bare 60-watt bulbs. Now, it has professional track lighting and much improved display space.

"Every day, people comment to me that this is the most attractive public art space in Northampton," she said.

The gallery is currently displaying "Japan: Two Photographic Perspectives" by local artists Chester Michalik and Andrew Sovjani. The exhibit will run until Saturday.

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