



DONNA REED
Foundation for the Performing Arts

DONNA'S 2015 BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION



NEWS FROM THE RED CARPET

Member Newsletter of the Donna Reed Foundation - 2015 - Issue 1

Paul Petersen's 2015 Donna Reed Birthday Tribute

Some birthdays mean more than others, and, in the case of Donna Reed, that is, for me, emphatically so. Donna was born on January 27th, 1921, and died too soon in 1986 of pancreatic cancer. She would have been 94 today. Donna Reed was a genuine Hollywood Star, complete with an Academy Award, MGM trained, and drop-dead gorgeous. She was also the oldest of five Iowa children and grew up during hard times. I continue to be amazed at her courage and resolve to head for Hollywood to pursue her dream.

She did it, came to fame on her terms, and left behind some images that will last as long as there is an audience to absorb the compelling two-dimensional images that pass for reality in a very tough business. But let me tell you true, she was so much more... and very much better in 3-D. How lucky I was to know her, work with her, and be shaped by her gentle love.

Happy Birthday, Donna Reed.

This Is Your Life, Donna Reed

In January the Donna Reed Foundation held its second annual Donna Reed Birthday Celebration. A short reception was held, which also served as a thank you to all the people who have volunteered, helping the Foundation in various capacities during the last few years. After the reception, a screening of the rarely seen television program *This Is Your Life, Donna Reed* was shown in the theater.

This Is Your Life was one of the most popular shows on television in the 1950s. It started on radio in the late 1940s, then made the transition to television in 1952. Each week the show would honor a celebrity, covering their life from early childhood up to current day accomplishments. But the one twist to this show was that the celebrity of the week had no idea they were going to be on the program. It was always a surprise. On March 26, 1958, Donna Reed was the surprise guest of honor.

Several people in Donna's life made surprise appearances throughout the program. Donna's parents and siblings; her best friend from high school; a favorite teacher from junior high and high school; and her first manager when she became an actress in Hollywood. Toward the end of the program, she is joined by her husband Tony Owen and her children.

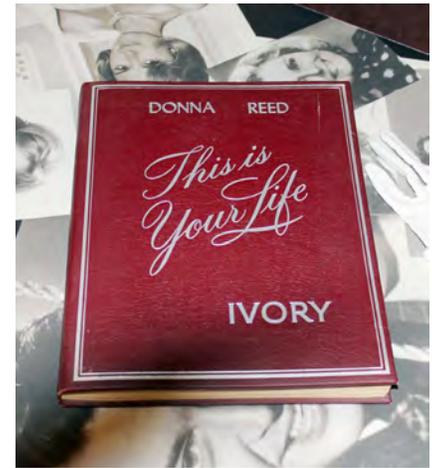
Throughout the show Ralph Edwards reads from a large book which has the name Donna Reed printed on the cover. The book contains notes about Donna's life, along with notes on each friend and family member appearing on the show that evening. This book was given to Donna to keep. It remained in her collection and it is now part of the Donna Reed Foundation archives. Those who attended the birthday celebration were able to gather around to look at the book after the screening of the show.

Whenever Donna appeared as a guest on a television or radio program, it was usually in an acting role. But with this episode of *This Is Your Life*, we have a rare opportunity to get a glimpse of Donna as herself, outside of acting. Watching the program, you get an immediate feeling of who she was as a person. As each friend came on stage and shared their memories of Donna that evening, there was a common thread in what each person had to say. Everyone stated that Donna was always a hard worker, never complained, and was always a joy to be around. What a great way to be remembered by your family and friends.

So it only seemed fitting that this episode of *This Is Your Life* be shown in honor of Donna, on her birthday. This program, a piece of history, is one of the closest things we have to knowing the real Donna Reed.

— Kurt Lee

Photo courtesy Josh Skinner



Left: Pam Soseman, Kurt Lee, and Pat Fleshner helped host our Donna Reed Birthday Celebration in the lobby of the theatre.

Above: The original *This is Your Life*, Donna Reed book seen in her 1958 live television episode.

Photos courtesy Josh Skinner

Today's Donna Reed Foundation

Welcome to spring and this new issue of *News from the Red Carpet*. We are excited to update you on all of the activities and successes of the Foundation that you help make possible. A sincere thank you to all of our many volunteers, contributors, visitors, and members who helped make 2014 another fantastic year for The Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts.

From the entertaining and educational *American Icon Series* to the rousing performance of *Summer Camp* by the Children's Musical Theatre Workshop to a renovation and 100-year re-dedication of the Donna Reed Theatre to the first ever Tri-City BBQ Fest – our Denison community work was in full swing.

Shining work from our Donna Reed Archives and Museum group was shared with the Iowa Historical Museum's *Hollywood in Heartland* exhibit in Des Moines and the *It's a Wonderful Life Museum* in Seneca Falls, New York along with incredible themed window displays of the Donna Reed Museum.

Mary Owen supported numerous presentations and events around the country, sharing many facets of her mother to thrilled audiences of film fans, war veterans, historians, and families of all ages.

Our year ahead promises more educational outreach (like the just-completed Iowa High School Speech Association competition, the Children's Musical Theatre Workshop in June, and our student scholarship work), more community engagement (including concerts, weddings, and special events in the Donna Reed Theatre), and a new/special neighbor in our candy kitchen later this summer.

Donna Reed left behind many gifts of artistry, insight, and inspiration that we are still unlocking today. With your continuing support, we look forward to sharing them with you wherever and whenever we can.

Thank you and welcome to your foundation.

–John Fujii, President, DRFPA



Iowa High School Speech Association

This February, I again had the pleasure of representing the Donna Reed Foundation at the Iowa High School Speech Association's All-State Large Group Festival held in Ames at the Iowa State University. I served as Guest Critic for the One Act Plays section held in Fisher Theater. It was wonderful to see the high quality of collaboration, communication, creative and critical thinking all coming together in this day of talent.

The performances happened all day long with a few breaks in between. West Des Moines Valley High School presented *Eurydice* with the collaboration of the ensemble creating scaffolding and strong vocal choral work that took us up into the Land of the Dead with physical movements by the Chorus of Stone. Ottumwa High School performed *Bang, Bang, You're Dead*, a play about school violence, shootings, and a deep look into the mind and emotions of Josh, a disturbed teen student. Cedar Rapids Kennedy High School presented August Wilson's *A Raisin in the Sun*, a challenging period family piece that was very well done.

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged by Forest City High School was a change to comedy that engaged, entertained, and even entertained according to the playwright's satirical point of view. Clarinda High School followed next with *Heart's Desire*, a "Theater of Absurd" portrayal of life's moments to replay of memories and choices with youthful actors playing old age with much fretting and dialogue.

Dubuque Senior High School's presentation of *The Laramie Project* was a production of a very important theme with multimedia that was well directed and acted. MOC-Floyd Valley followed with *September Bears*, a heartwarming story of working with disabled children who gathered bears for giving away – it was told with humanness and humor.

Check Please, the final performance, is a comedy that high school actors love because it is a simple telling of a farcical situation of the first date in the search to finding your true mate. Actors get to present a clear portrayal of the diversity of singles, and Alta-Aurelia High School told the story with pace and a great depth of acting.

Overall, the event was a wonderful experience and the talent and craft continue to delight. It was a pleasure to serve and to share.

– Gai Jones

Director, actress, theater educator, and author, Gai Jones has been a long time contributor to the Donna Reed Foundation and its support of the Iowa High School Speech Association. Our special thanks to her voluntary efforts year after year! – Editor

Donna's IHSSA

The Iowa High School Speech Association (IHSSA) is part of an over 125-year old tradition of high school speech associations in Iowa. Jay Fultz noted in his biography, *In Search of Donna Reed*, that Donnabelle Mullenger participated in a precursor of the IHSSA events when she was in school.

The Donna Reed Foundation has proudly supported IHSSA events for many years with performing arts professionals to critic the One-Act performances at the All-State Large Group Festival in Ames every February. For the 2014 festival, Paul Petersen returned to Ames to support a guest critic role. Gai Jones served this year's festival as she has done at least four different years. Support of Donna Reed Foundation volunteer critics at the festival has always been a highlight of that showcase and greatly appreciated by all of its participants.

Our continued thanks to everyone who has supported this important collaboration.

– Pat Fleshner



Left: The latest museum exhibits in Karolyn Grime's donated cases.

Above: Close up of Donna Reed's Another Mother for Peace work in the 1960s.

Photos courtesy Mary Owen

Another Wonderful Life Holiday Season!

The 2014 Holiday season screenings of and events connected with *It's A Wonderful Life* just continue to grow. Last December I was lucky enough to introduce the film at seven separate screenings, as well as attend the three-day *It's A Wonderful Life* festival in Seneca Falls, New York. For those of you who are not familiar, Seneca Falls is the rumored inspiration for the fictional town of Bedford Falls in the film.

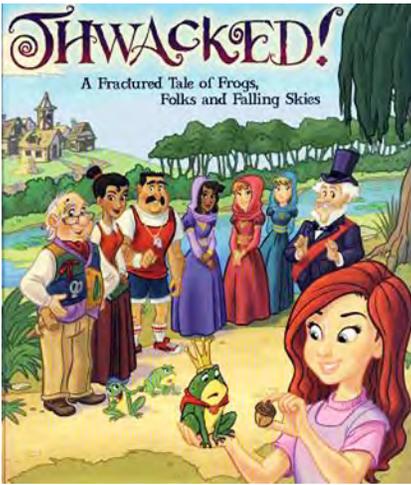
The favorable weather this time allowed for a record attendance. It also shows how important this film continues to be in people's lives. The *Seneca Falls It's A Wonderful Life Museum and Archives* kicked things off by hosting a preview on Thursday night, Dec 11th of the museum's four, brand-new exhibits. They are – (1) *It's A Wonderful Life* as a Reflection of "The Greatest Generation." (2) Donna Reed: From the Girl Back Home to Mary Bailey to Another Mother For Peace." (3) The Films of Karolyn Grimes and (4) Carol Coombs: Remembering Janie. Karolyn Grimes donated several large, glass exhibition cases and many memorabilia items from her collection.

The Festival features a wide variety of events, more than 20 on Saturday, including the George Bailey Award, Horse drawn carriage rides, actors portraying characters from the film. My favorite, of course, is the man playing Mr. Potter sitting in an old-fashioned wheel chair yelling at everyone while smoking a cigar. The *It's A Wonderful Life* Parade was lots of fun, with over 25 groups participating. There's the Uncle Billy's Scavenger Hunt and (what always amazes me) - the *It's A Wonderful* 5K run which usually boasts about 3,000 runners—in the freezing cold!

This was my second year attending and everyone was so gracious and the fans were all so loving towards Mom. The museum asked me to make another special presentation on Mom again this year and it was packed. I spent more time discussing Mom's role as symbol of our country during World War 2 to her anti-war activism in the 1960's.

It was a busy, bustling weekend. Karolyn, Carol and I gave a short presentation on the film and answered questions. It seems like there's always something new to learn. Did you know that the scene when Mary tells George that she's pregnant—remember the long string with the circle around it hanging from the ceiling like it's a light switch? That's Frank Capra making a reference to the image of George lassoing the moon! Finally, one of my life's greatest gifts is getting to spend time with Zuzu and Janie.

--Mary Owen



"Thwacked" is Coming to Denison, Iowa

A FRACTURED FABLE OF FROGS, FOLKS AND FALLING SKIES

Thwacked is the Children's Musical Theater workshop production planned for this summer. It's a fun-filled week designed to teach the basics of musical theater to kids in grades K-8 who love singing, dancing and challenges. The workshop runs from June 15-19, 2015 and concludes with a performance for the public on Saturday, June 20.

Since its modest beginning in 2004, this popular workshop has blossomed under the direction of Allison Rasmussen, a Manilla native and vocal music instructor at Waverly-Shell Rock Community Schools. This is the eighth year she has volunteered to head this workshop production. Rasmussen is assisted by a dedicated team, including former students who have aged out of the program. All give a week of their time to help stage the production.

A couple of local grandparents have also discovered a side benefit of the workshop - they enroll their grandchildren in the program, who then get to spend a week with them while attending the workshop.

Additional workshop information and tuition rates are available now on www.DonnaReed.org. Subscribe to workshop announcements at <http://eepurl.com/SZzRT>.

-- Jerry Peterman



Above: Archive visitors examine one of the many artifacts professionally preserved in the museum archives by our volunteer archivists. This clip book was from Donna's personal collection.

We suspect that you continue to add to your personal archives - so does the Donna Reed Heritage Museum/Archives. We welcome donations relating to Donna Reed and our local history. And, like you, we will manage to squeeze them into our already bulging collection.

-- Jerry Peterman

The Donna Reed Heritage Museum/Archives

You probably have an archive. It might be in a filing cabinet in your study, a box in a closet, or a chest in the attic. It's your personal collection of material that records important events from your family's history.

The Donna Reed Heritage Museum/Archives does the same thing. Its mission is to preserve and share a rich cultural heritage through a vast collection of Donna Reed's personal artifacts, mementos, and media. It also houses a collection of Denison history.

In 2008, the Foundation received a grant from the State Historical Society of Iowa to develop an archival storage space and to train volunteers to assess, conserve and protect the collection. The space was finished in 2009 and the entire collection moved from various parts of the Foundation building into a secure, climate-controlled environment. Since then, volunteers Pam Soseman and Jerry Peterman have worked to stabilize and inventory the collection. They are also responsible for the design and installation of rotating exhibits for the museum and the front window of the Foundation office.

The archives also hosts individuals doing research and has partnered on exhibits with other museums such the State Historical Museum of Iowa (Des Moines, IA), the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum (West Branch, IA), It's a Wonderful Life Museum (Seneca Falls, NY) and the Orpheum Theater (Marshalltown, IA).



Donna Reed
1921 - 1986

- **Actress**
- **Producer**
- **Activist**
- **Mother**
- **Friend**
- **Role model**

Donna Reed touched many lives with her talent, integrity, and humanity. Born Donnabelle Mullenger near Denison, Iowa, she was an award-winning actress, pioneering executive producer, activist leader, and loving parent. Founded in 1986, today's not-for-profit Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts perpetuates her spirit for excellence in education and community.

Membership Renewal

Have you renewed your membership today? Consider gift memberships, too. Since 1986, your contributions have made the difference with our volunteer-driven work and goals.

Visit www.DonnaReed.org, email us at info@donnareed.org, or phone us today (712.263.3334). Thank you!

DRFPA AT A GLANCE

Mark your calendars with these important dates. More detail available at www.DonnaReed.org.

May

[1] - 2015 Iowa Drama Merit Awards application starts today (Up to \$1,000 awards for 10-12th grade promising talent - see website for details)

June

[15-19] - Children's Musical Theater Workshop
[20] - CMT Performance (High School)
[30] - 2015 Iowa Drama Merit Award applications due in Denison.

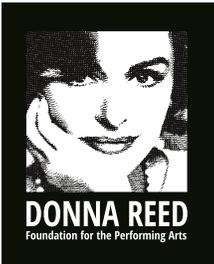
July

August

September

[18-19] - Denison TriCity BBQ (Uptown)
[30] 2015 Iowa Drama Merit Award notifications

October



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DONNA REED
Foundation for the Performing Arts



NEWS FROM THE RED CARPET
Member Newsletter of the Donna Reed Foundation - 2015 - Issue 2

**SEASON'S GREETINGS AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR IN
2016 FROM THE DRFPA.**

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WITH APPRECIATION

Thank you always to all of our members, contributors, volunteers, and sponsors. With this issue, special thanks to:

- Chris Petersen
- Crawford County Bank
- Crawford County Community Foundation
- Denison Rotary
- Pat Houston
- Pete Rodriguez
- Petersen Manufacturing Co. Inc.
- Vetter Equipment
- Wells Fargo Bank

**The Dream Lives On:
Kari Wahlgren**

Kari Wahlgren, our 1995 national scholar originally from Hoisington, Kansas, recently checked in with the Donna Reed Foundation to update us and lend some donation support back to our merit awards program. "I can't tell you how much it meant to me to win the Donna Reed Scholarship all those years ago," she wrote. Kari now resides in Los Angeles and is a successful actress, especially in the voiceover world where she has contributed to over 300 cartoons, video games, and commercials. Her credits include Disney/PIXAR animations (*BOLT*, *Planes*, *Planes 2*, *Paperman*), Nickelodeon/DreamWorks Animation series (*Kung Fu Panda: Legends of Awesomeness*), and many animation classics such as the anime TV mini-series, *FLCL* (as the English version of *Haruko Haruhara*). Kari's fan following finds her at major events such as *ComicCon* (San Diego) and *FanExpo* (Toronto). She warmly advises aspiring voice actors from her website (kariwahlgren.net) to listen, learn, practice, exercise, and stretch themselves in all directions to relate to their most important instrument – *their voice*. *Voice is the performance - even if nothing is said*. In the Academy Award® winning animated short, *Paperman*, Kari told the *KU Alumni Association* that she voiced Meg mostly as "vocal 'ambiance' they could experiment with... vocal reactions [such as] snorts, gasps, breaths. I think one chuckle made it into the final mix. I'm actually glad they kept it mostly silent - I think it makes the short even more powerful that way."



Photo courtesy Kari Wahlgren

Kari said she was very glad to see us continuing with our Donna Reed merit recognition programs. "I would like to give a little back to help someone else," reflecting on the spirit that supported her two decades earlier. We are pleased that she rejoins our continuum of performance and educational arts as a positive role model for future artists from the Midwest and beyond. *Thank you, Kari!*

-- John Fujii

"They Were Expendable" – A Treasure Remastered for Posterity

On Friday, September 4, 2015, my brother Tim and I attended a special screening of a newly remastered print of the 1945 classic, *They Were Expendable*, at the Egyptian Theater on Hollywood Boulevard. This event also coincided with the release of a new book – "Behind the Scenes of *They Were Expendable* – A Pictorial History," by Lou Sabini and Nicholas Scutti. We attended at the invitation of Stan Taffel and the Cinecon Classic Film Festival, an organization dedicated to the enjoyment and preservation of Hollywood cinematic history since 1965. Dan Ford, director John Ford's grandson, also attended the event.

Cinecon 51, this year's festival, was a five-day gathering over Labor Day weekend to celebrate classic cinema (www.cinecon.org). The schedule was extensive and some titles have not screened to the public since their original release long ago. This was the first time I have seen *They Were Expendable* on a full-sized movie screen. The print was really well done, almost like it was shot just last week. Stan pointed out to me that this print came from a newly assembled and renovated negative and soundtrack. The 35mm result (along with a digital capture) will be archived so that future generations will be able to enjoy this work decades (if not centuries) from now.

It was also nice to see the number of 20- and 30- something folks attending this event who have a love, nay passion, for films of the past. I think it is important to keep something like that alive. We need to encourage everyone, especially youth, to follow their passions, especially when they carry forward in such a positive way. Mom would have approved. *Keep up the good work!*

-- Tony Owen

The Leap - Making Your Difference Today

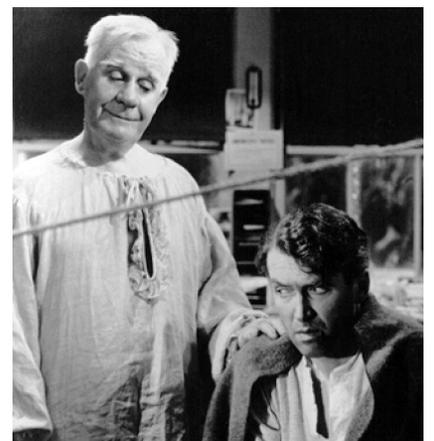
I visited Denison in September, a trip I have faithfully made since 1990. The drive from Colorado allows for plenty of time to reflect. This time around, I had a small "George Bailey" moment somewhere in the middle of Nebraska. I thought about how different things would have been for me on a different path. A long time ago, I was on my way to Hollywood myself – to work for George Lucas or Steve Jobs in the growing field of computer graphics and animation. Instead, however, I decided to work at HP in Colorado and that put me close enough to impulsively reach out to Denison and its little performing arts festival in 1990. I made a choice and then put some action behind it (not even knowing my destination or its promise). What if I had not *jumped in* like George? If Donna Reed had not made her own choices and actions the way she did, today's reality would most definitely be different – perhaps with paths that never crossed, at least not knowingly. Yet we have made incredible connections and we continue to make amazing differences to young and old alike.

I made a choice to be an explorer and put some action behind it. So did Donna. So can you. You are an important part of the Donna Reed Foundation – and what you do today gives an important meaning to tomorrow. Act today, now, and together let's make something special happen we can all look back upon with satisfaction.

--John Fujii, President, DRFPA



John Ford's vision was as fresh as if it were filmed yesterday!





Seneca Falls: Convention Days July 17-19, 2015

This summer, thanks to the *It's A Wonderful Life Museum* and *The Women's Rights Historical Park*, Mom was included in their three day celebration of feisty American women whose courage, conviction and passion brought forth the concept of equal rights for women. The very first convention met in July 1848, at the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York, where Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others, mostly Quaker women, convened to discuss "the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women." The results of this and subsequent meetings was the "Declaration of Sentiments" which, as some of you may know, Frederick Douglass was instrumental in supporting. I was honored that Mom was included in this celebration situated at the birthplace of women's rights along with the special exhibit at the IAWL Museum on her work with Another Mother for Peace, established in 1967 to specifically help end the war in Viet Nam.

I spoke about how Mom had expanded the value of motherhood by her experience of three great families – first, her birth family of Hazel and William Mullenger and her four siblings growing up on a farm outside of Denison. Secondly, there was her own wonderful family she created with my father, Tony Owen, which includes my siblings, Penny, Tony, and Tim. Finally, she had her television family that included Shelley, Paul, and Carl. Mom was able to promote *Another Mother for Peace* through the power of her recognition as a media star, but her true function within the organization was that of being one more mother who never wanted to lose any son or brother or husband to war. In a letter to Richard Nixon dated November 6, 1968, she wrote:

"You said you will welcome new ideas. We ask you to welcome an old one - but one whose time has come. The idea of a Secretary of Peace and a Department of Peace, first suggested in 1779 by Dr. Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, is once more before Congress (H.R. 19650 and S. 4019). We request the opportunity to meet with you before your inauguration to explain how 40% of your constituency (mothers of this nation) feel about this."

-- Mary Owen

Donna's AMP

Another Mother for Peace (AMP) grew out of a child's first birthday gathering in 1967. Barbara Avedon, friend and writer for *The Donna Reed Show*, was concerned that she was raising her son only to send him off to U.S. armed conflicts like the war in Vietnam. Later, Barbara, Donna, and 13 other women met to form a non-partisan women's peace group dedicated to education and activism against wars (especially the Vietnam war) as a means of solving disputes between nations, peoples, and ideologies. Donna and others worked vigorously on writing and speaking campaigns, calling for the creation of a cabinet-level Department of Peace and opposition to the actions and funding of the U.S. military around the world. Hundreds of thousands of cards and letters were sent to Washington DC in protest.

Although officially closed in 1985, a new AMP was later reborn by Carol Schneider and Josh Avedon as a nonprofit, non-partisan peace organization for the 21st century.

[Wikipedia.org, Swarthmore College Peace Collection]



Photo courtesy Leisa Fox

Donna Reed Scholar Profile: Leisa Fox

As part of Donna Reed's commitment to education and encouragement of young people in the performing arts, The Donna Reed Foundation commemorated her legacy with a scholarship fund in 1986. Leisa Gunderson of Denison, now Leisa Fox, was the first recipient of this award in 1987. Designed to assist graduating high school seniors pursue performing arts studies in college, Leisa used her \$2,000 award for theater studies at University of Iowa and later at Iowa State University, finishing her degree in speech and communications.

"I did a lot of community productions as well throughout the years," Leisa says. She credits her Donna Reed Scholarship with providing encouragement to pursue drama and commit herself to excellence in her profession. She currently serves as vice president of QPS Employment

Group in Des Moines where she manages the sales operations. Leisa was even more excited about pursuing a career in drama after receiving her scholarship. "I developed a great relationship with Grover Asmus (Donna Reed's husband) and Norma Connolly (veteran actress and close friend of Donna Reed). After two years of college, I went out to Hollywood and visited with Grover and Norma. Norma invited me to come out and live with her – I was all ready to move to Hollywood."

Then she received some important advice from her mentor she will never forget. "I asked Norma - are you sure I'm ready for this? are you sure I can do this?" Norma thoughtfully answered – "if you have to ask me that, you're not ready." Leisa remained in Iowa, but her love of theater has not diminished. "Theater is on hold until the kids get older," she notes of her Johnston, Iowa, family with husband, son, and daughter, "but I do a lot of public speaking now, and with the large audiences I speak to all over the country, the theater background has really helped." Leisa also remains a longtime admirer of Donna Reed. "I watched all of her movies and fell in love with her. She was part of the reason I wanted to continue in theater."

Today Leisa relies on her acting experience to reach others in a big way. "The confidence is the main thing. With confidence comes credibility and the opportunity to present yourself in a confident manner that makes a big difference. It opens doors that other people won't have." It reminds her of her first Iowa State stage production, too. "I remember looking out at that huge audience and thinking, man, if I can do this, I can do anything."

--Chuck Signs



Another Successful Summer Musical Theatre Workshop

The prince was rude and arrogant. He got changed into a frog. He got another chance to become the prince he was born to be. That was the story told by musical theater students in their production of *Thwacked! A Fractured Tale of Frogs, Folks and Falling Skies*. It was the final event of a week-long workshop that immersed students in the basics of musical theater, along with problem solving, critical thinking and building self-confidence. A total of 40 students from 28 families in grades K-12 were involved in the workshop.

Allison Rasmussen, vocal music instructor from Waverly-Shell Rock Community Schools, returned for her eighth summer of directing the workshop. She was assisted by a volunteer staff of 17 who handled choreography, costuming, set design, props, lighting and sound.

Students were also eligible to audition for talent awards. A total of \$400 was distributed to 11 workshop students for voice, piano, baritone horn, trumpet, guitar, dance and gymnastics. The workshop was sponsored by The Donna Reed Foundation and Vision Care Clinic of Denison (Doctors Morris Kuhlmann, Steven Brownmiller, Scott Bowker, Keith Schrunk and Alex Benner). Oh, yes. *And they all lived happily ever-after.*

-- Jerry Peterman (photos courtesy Ann Voggesser)



Mullenger Family Farm - Donna Reed Historic Site

Donna Reed was born Donnabelle Mullenger on a farm just outside of Denison, Iowa.... Many biographies begin with the Mullenger farm, yet its location was largely unknown to curious visitors. "Drive south a few miles on Donna Reed Road – it's right there on the right side of the road." Yet with the loss of the family farmhouse to fire in 1983, the exact location could have been anywhere in the hilly, rich farming district. Fast forward to today. "A special thanks goes out to Pat Houston, current owner of the Mullenger farm," notes Mary Owen. In 2014, he discovered a huge boulder while working by the creek. Extracting it with a backhoe, he dragged the rock up the steep hillside to the farm entrance and contacted Mary with an exciting

idea of memorializing Donna's childhood home with the new marker. Mary and volunteers worked with Internet and private donors to raise funds for the project. She also worked closely with Chris Petersen to create the permanent plaque illustrating the Mullenger farmhouse and filling in Donna's and the Mullenger story. Petersen Manufacturing Co. built the platform and plaque while Vetter Equipment helped finalize the monument's location. "I'm happy to report that as of last April, the rock memorial was officially finished for the original Mullenger farm," Mary said. It resides 6.0 miles south of Hwy 30 on Donna Reed Road. Plans for a future dedication are in the works. Thank you again to Chris Petersen, Pat Houston, and everyone at the Donna Reed Foundation for making this piece of history possible.

-- John Fujii (photos by author)



The Bake Shop & Hollywood Café Debuts on Broadway (and Main)

The Donna Reed Foundation welcomes *The Bake Shop & Hollywood Café* to its new uptown location in the Donna Reed Center. The WESCO Industries outlet opened this September after an extensive renovation of the service and preparation facilities. The new Bake Shop offers a daily assortment of fresh-baked goods along with café lunch offerings that feature a variety of satisfying specialties. Kathy Hasik, master baker, and Clay Adams, executive director, expressed excitement about the new locale and the promising opportunity to work with our foundation. "This gives us a nice storefront to our on-demand baking at WESCO," said Kathy during initial talks, "and the theming possibilities are endless."

During the Tri-City BBQ event, Tony Owen enjoyed his lunches at the new café. "The Deni-bons cinnamon rolls were excellent and I later found out that 'Peter's Stuffed Baked Potato' was the innovation of Kathy's son, Peter. It reminded me of some of the stuffed potatoes I had in England – delicious. I like the new space design, too. It's bright and open – the little café tables near the front make a more intimate environment." John Fujii, also in town from Colorado, agreed. "Very inviting space," he said, "and I really appreciate the hard work put in by all our volunteers, especially Roy Voggesser and Pete Rodriguez for their beautiful floor work."

The Bake Shop & Hollywood Café can be reached at (712) 263 5552 or their lively Facebook page.

-- Photos courtesy John Fujii



Donna Reed
1921 - 1986

- **Actress**
- **Producer**
- **Activist**
- **Mother**
- **Friend**
- **Role model**

Donna Reed touched many lives with her talent, integrity, and humanity. Born Donnabelle Mullenger near Denison, Iowa, she was an award-winning actress, pioneering executive producer, activist leader, and loving parent. Started as a film festival and scholarship fund in 1986, today's nonprofit Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts perpetuates her spirit for excellence in education and community.

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Visit www.DonnaReed.org, email us at info@donnareed.org, or phone us today (712.263.3334). Thank you!

DRFPA AT A GLANCE

Mark your calendars with these important dates. More detail available at DonnaReed.org.

December

[13] - *It's A Wonderful Life* - free screenings

January

Donna Reed Merit Award info posted online in January

[25] - Donna Reed's Birthday Event

[30] - Icon Series - *Living Rushmore*

February

[20] - Icon Series - *Iowa Caucuses*

March

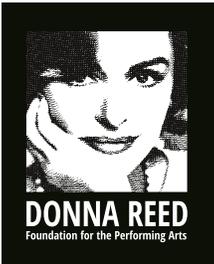
[12] - Icon Series - *Mark Twain*

April

May

June

[13-18] - Children's Musical Theater



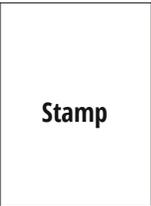
The Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts

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www.DonnaReed.org





DONNA REED
Foundation for the Performing Arts



NEWS FROM THE RED CARPET

Member Newsletter of the Donna Reed Foundation - 2016 - Issue 1

SUMMER IN HIGH GEAR AT THE DRFPA.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Remembering Donna
- Concert Fund Raiser
- President's Message
- Iowa Speech Festival
- American Icon Series
- Children's Musical Theater Workshop
- Profile - Roy Voggesser
- Museum Window Repair
- DRFPA at a Glance

WITH APPRECIATION

Thank you always to all of our members, contributors, volunteers, and sponsors. With this issue, special thanks to:

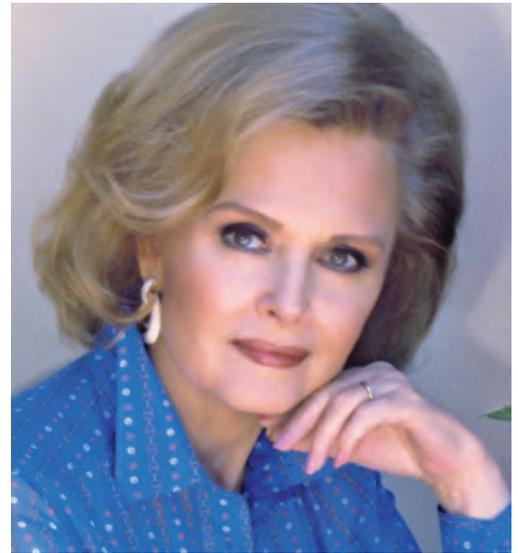
- Allison Rasmussen
- Chris Petersen
- Crawford County Community Foundation
- Donna Meinen
- Eddie Foy III
- Jerry Peterman
- Kari Wahlgren
- Nathan Mahrt
- Pam Soseman
- Pat Fleshner
- Petersen Manufacturing Co. Inc.
- Steve Brownmiller
- Tim Tracy

An Evening with Donna: A 30th Reflection

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Donna Reed's sudden passing in 1986. To reflect on this milestone, the Foundation held a special panel and reception to celebrate her life and inspiration from those who knew her directly. Kurt Lee, board member and historian, led an intimate discussion about Donna with Tony Owen, Jr. (son), Mary Owen (daughter), and Eddie Foy III (casting director for *The Donna Reed Show*). Mary shared vibrant WWII servicemen letters modestly saved by Donna and only discovered by her family in 2003. Tony reflected upon Donna as mother and how she carefully separated family and business life while at home. To him, she was an encouraging mother with Iowa values who instilled responsibility and work ethic in her children by careful tally of personal family chores. While Mary remembered learning to swim from "Aunt" Esther [Williams], Tony mentioned that contemporary Hollywood personalities visiting the house were extremely rare in his memory.

Eddie praised Tony Owen and Donna for their special fairness and risk taking, especially in supporting his own career confidence and, memorably, to supporting roles for minority and disabled actors. "They were incredible, and I miss them both terribly." Mary rounded out the discussion by sharing some of Donna's humanitarian activist leadership with *Another Mother for Peace* during the Vietnam War. Kurt applauded Donna's consistent personal integrity in all the stories heard that evening. A special episode of the Donna Reed Show capstoned the evening along with a delicious reception supplied by the Bake Shop and Hollywood Café. Donna's Academy Award® also made a special appearance from the Des Moines 'Hollywood in the Heartland' history exhibit through the Crawford County Historical Society. Special thanks to all who helped make this evening special.

-- John Fujii



1985 portrait by Tony Owen, Jr



2016 Fundraiser: Rock Legends in Denison

The Foundation is pleased to host numerous stage and screen events for Denison and surrounding community. Events such as *The American Icon Series*, Donna Reed birthday anniversaries, and important movie screenings such as the holiday classic, *It's a Wonderful Life*, are enjoyed by wide audiences year round.

Vital to the health of these presentations and this nonprofit organization is also our fundraising efforts. Foundation volunteer, Steve Brownmiller, has been a key organizer of our annual fundraising efforts for many years – events that included the *Donna Reed Festival Celebrity Golf Tournaments* and the popular *Wine & Beer Tasting Events* that mixed spirits, food, auctions, and entertainment into a great evening.

For 2016, Steve brought forward a new idea. A number of Denisonians had heard a group out of Omaha, *Billy McGuigan's Band*, and its audience-customized *Rock Legends* concert. With their enthusiasm for the band, Steve proposed a concert in place of the annual Wine & Beer Tasting event. He spoke with businesses about the band and efforts to bring the group in for a key Foundation fundraiser. The response was very positive. Sponsors would receive tickets to the concert and be able to visit with band members at a "Meet and Greet" gathering before the show. Steve's volunteers donated many hours for a visibility campaign where letters were sent to individuals telling them about the fundraiser with event and ticket information. The Foundation office staff was astounded by the response and the theater was almost sold out for the evening. Donna Meinen, Foundation Office Manager, remarked "a month after the concert, we are still hearing wonderful comments from those who attended." Thank you to Steve Brownmiller, his volunteers, and the sponsors for all of their work in organizing an amazing event and supporting the Foundation with another vital fundraising effort.

-- Pat Fleshner (photos courtesy Ann Voggesser)

An Amazing Start: 30 Years Young

In 30 years, we have only scratched the surface of beginning to know and appreciate all of Donna Reed's facets and potentials. During our remembrance panel in June, we got a rare glimpse of her ample yet private side as mother, producer, and humanitarian. For me, I sensed a great attention and care when she engaged with you in an important way. When she wrote letters back to admirers in WWII, she honored both sides of the exchange with precious encouragement and equal appreciation for the letter she received. When managing her show, she trusted the gifts and contributions of others and achieved a higher level of family for all involved. When she was a parent home from work, she was just that – involved mother, mentor, and caring family member. She was an intellectual, an artist, and a person of action and curiosity. She was gone well before her time, yet she feels very much alive in what she inspires today.

Please join us with your own support, curiosity, and inspired actions by helping to live her dream in the many years ahead. We have much work and joy to discover on her behalf with generations yet to meet her. I think Donna would have been thrilled with your support and our road ahead - *thank you!*

--John Fujii, President, DRFPA



Donna and Tony Owen, 1959



Iowa High School Speech Association

For years, the Foundation has proudly worked with the Iowa High School Speech Association and its Executive Director, Craig Ihnen, to support its annual All-State Large Group Festival in Ames with professionals to provide critique at the event. Last year's judge was long-time volunteer Gai Jones (*profiled in our 2015, Issue 1 newsletter*).

This year we were delighted to bring Kari Wahlgren, actress and Donna Reed Foundation 1995 National Scholar back to Iowa (*profiled in 2015, Issue 2 newsletter*). Kari enjoyed judging the One-Act Plays during her time at the Ames Festival and visited Denison overnight to see the updated Donna Reed Center, Museum, and Archives since she last visited in 1995. Kari was a charming and gracious guest, hosted by Pam Soseman, Pat Fleshner, and Donna Meinen among others she met during her brief stay. Thank you so much, Kari, and best to you in your work - we look forward to seeing you in Denison again soon!

-- Pat Fleshner (photos courtesy Pat Fleshner, Doug Soseman)

American Icon Series - 2015-2016

With a political year coming up, the 2015-2016 Series focused on U.S. Presidents and history (past and present). This fifth series featured tribute artists portraying Will Rogers, the four Presidents of Mount Rushmore (*Living Rushmore*), and author, Mark Twain. Interactive in nature, audiences were treated to the depth and breadth of these experts who remained in character throughout their entire performance, even respecting "their own time period" relative to each other and audience questions.



The history and humor provided was priceless. You can read books or see movies, but this living history went beyond to leave a great impression. Thanks to Tim Tracy for organizing another wonderful series.

-- Pat Fleshner



An American Icon

Inspired by Donna Reed's iconic imprint on American history, the Foundation has celebrated great moments, peoples, and excellence in entertainment since 2011 through *The American Icon Series* of unique performance experiences.

Living history portrayals of Eleanor Roosevelt, George Washington Carver, President Lincoln, President Teddy Roosevelt, and Mark Twain came to life on the Donna Reed Theater stage for area students.

Audiences cheered for Carla DelVillaggio's recreation of Barbra Streisand standards and laughed at Jim Malmberg's live Johnny Carson Show.

Attendees witnessed key anniversaries for JFK, the Beatles, Donna Reed's Academy Award®, and the recreation of the play "*Within the Law*" that was first performed on the German Opera House stage in 1917.

Thank you to Tim Tracy and many others for their hard work and support of this indelible series of performing arts and educational experiences for Western Iowa.

-- John Fujii



Children's Musical Theater Workshop Roars with "Lion King" Production

The popular Disney musical, *Lion King*, pushed this year's Children's Musical Theater Workshop enrollment to near capacity. The workshop attracted 52 students from 40 families. Most were from within 30 miles of Denison but also included students from the Omaha, Nebraska and Denver, Colorado areas.

The workshop is designed for young performers in grades K-8. Students are introduced to the basics of musical theater and how to communicate a story to their audience through acting, music and dance. The highlight of the workshop is the culminating performance of the workshop production. Students who have aged out of the program are included as part of the production crew.

Students also had an opportunity to audition for Achievement Awards during the workshop. A total of \$500 was distributed to 11 students whose talents ranged from vocal to instrumental to dance performances.

The workshop has blossomed under the direction of Allison Rasmussen, a Manilla, Iowa native and instructional coach at the Waverly-Shell Rock Community Schools in northeastern Iowa. This was her tenth year of heading the workshop production, assisted by a team of ten volunteers who handle choreography, costuming, set design, props, lighting and sound for this immersive experience.

"It's always fun to come back and work with students who are so motivated," said Rasmussen. "They learn their lines and songs in just five days. Plus, I have this dream team of folks to help make a great, fun production for the kids. The Saturday afternoon performance always amazes me."

The Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts has sponsored a week-long Children's Musical Theater Workshop, specifically designed for elementary students, each June since 2005.

-- Jerry Peterman (photos courtesy Ann Voggesser, John Fujii)

Photos of Disney's *Lion King* KIDS can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/gn84ed5>





Volunteer Profile: Roy Voggesser

It's hard to think of any job that Roy Voggesser hasn't done or won't do for the Donna Reed Foundation. This irrepressible and indispensable volunteer became involved after retiring from his career in education, recognizing the value of the Foundation for the community that he has called home for 55 years.

Roy gives in all needs of the Donna Reed Center and Foundation – from building maintenance to guided tours to working on the board of directors. He started by helping drive a shuttle during the early festival workshops. Soon he was doing tech and helping Don Uker with video interviews as cameraman. "Each year I was asked to do a little more. I was asked to be a member of the board and I still am," Roy said with enthusiasm.

Roy was a biology teacher and coach now turned avid historian. He graduated from Iowa State Teachers College (now the University of Northern Iowa). He served two years in the Army and began teaching in 1961. "I came to Denison to teach school," Roy said, applying so he could teach in the same school as his new bride, Ann, who just started teaching music.

Roy's retirement generously allows him to share his vast accumulated stories about Donna Reed with museum visitors from around the world, much to their delight and appreciation. He also tirelessly watches over all aspects of running and maintaining the building. "I saw the value of maintaining the Foundation. It was a nice thing. I think the Foundation and the theater building and museum are a good resource in Denison," he said. He also appreciates additional volunteer help with these duties – they help extend the hours the museum is open and grow the history base. "I'd like to think that I help preserve the idea that life is pretty good to us. Take the name of the famous movie, 'It's a Wonderful Life.' It is that. Keep a positive vision of the world around you," Roy said. Both Roy and Ann Voggesser are gems for the Foundation and Denison in everything they do.

– Chuck Signs

[Please read Roy's full profile here – <http://www.DonnaReed.org/news/roy.html> - Ed.]



Donna Reed Museum Window Restoration

A new look can be seen in the window area of the museum. Due to years of water infiltration around the front window, the trim needed rework to protect the building. In the process of the repairs, the plywood display area also required replacement. A custom concrete base was produced, installed, and donated to the Foundation by Petersen Manufacturing Company Concrete Products of Denison. We thank Chris Petersen and his expert crew for this excellent addition to our facility.

The new countertop was heavier than the old supports could handle, so the display area was strengthened. Funds for the support work were provided by the Crawford County Community Foundation. Nathan Mahrt provided his expertise and materials for the window phase of the project. Also, before the project finished, a time capsule of Foundation current events, memorabilia, and a copy of the *Denison Bulletin & Review* newspaper was sealed under the countertop for future generations to find.

– Roy Voggesser (photos courtesy Ann Voggesser)





Donna Reed
1921 - 1986

- **Actress**
- **Producer**
- **Activist**
- **Mother**
- **Friend**
- **Role model**

Donna Reed touched many lives with her talent, integrity, and humanity. Born Donnabelle Mullenger near Denison, Iowa, she was an award-winning actress, pioneering executive producer, activist leader, and loving parent. Started as a film festival and scholarship fund in 1986, today's nonprofit Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts perpetuates her spirit for excellence in education and community.

Membership Renewal

Have you renewed your membership today? Consider gift memberships, too. Since 1986, your contributions have made the difference with our volunteer-driven work and goals.

Visit www.DonnaReed.org, email us at info@donnareed.org, or phone us today (712.263.3334). Thank you!

DRFPA AT A GLANCE

Important dates for the DRFPA. More detail available at DonnaReed.org.

August

[30] - Motor coach tour

September

[9-10] - Iglesias Fuente de Vida Church

[16-17] - BBQ Days Open House

[24] - Crawford County Arts Council

October

[7,8] - Questers Tour

[23] - Rave On concert

November

[12] - Elvis Show

[15] - Crawford County Arts Council

[20] - CDC Recipe Walk

December

[10] - CDC Kids Movie & Santa Visit

[11] - *It's A Wonderful Life* - free screenings - 3pm & 7pm

[23] - Wedding

January

[23] - Donna Reed's Birthday Event

February

• - open

March

[2] - Crawford County Arts Council

April

[22] - Crawford County Arts Council

May

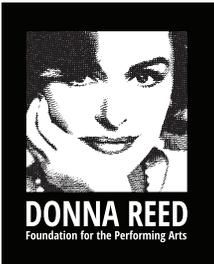
• - open

June

[12-17] - Children's Musical Theater Workshop

[17] - Wedding

[21-22] - National Lincoln Highway Annual Meeting



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NEWS FROM THE RED CARPET

Member Newsletter of the Donna Reed Foundation - 2017 - Issue 1

SIGHTS ON SUMMER AT THE DRFPA.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Two Museum Treasures
- IAWL 70th Anniversary
- President's Message
- *Hollywood in the Heartland*
- DRF Archives Grant
- Photographic Memories of Mom
- Remembering Debbie Reynolds
- Profile - Pat Fleshner
- DRFPA at a Glance

WITH APPRECIATION

Thank you always to all of our members, contributors, volunteers, and sponsors. With this issue, special thanks to:

- Gai Jones
- Crawford County Community Foundation
- Donna Meinen
- Jerry Peterman
- Kenny Kahl
- Nathan Mahrt
- Pam Soseman
- Pat and Lyle Fleshner
- Steve Brownmiller

Two Museum Treasures

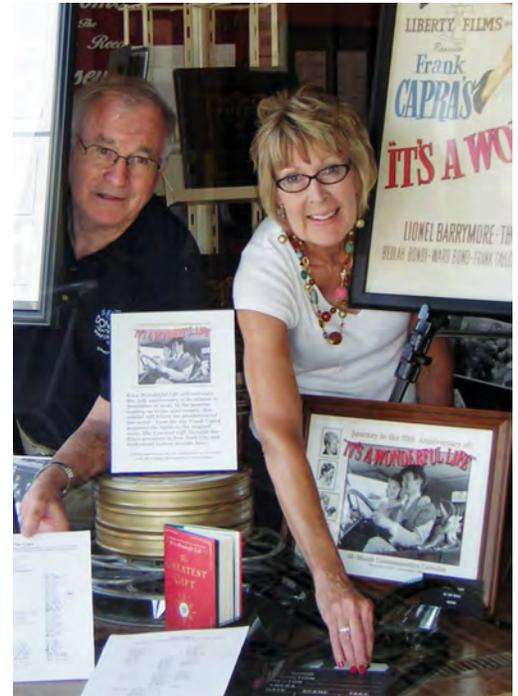
The Donna Reed Heritage Museum and Archives are massive undertakings for the Foundation. Meet Jerry Peterman and Pam Soseman, two behind-the-scenes volunteers who lead these projects in a big way. Jerry and Pam have long histories with the Donna Reed Foundation, dating back to the early years of the organization. For years, Jerry volunteered in office production work, especially workshop and event support for booklets and programs. Pam helped with Foundation workshops, co-chairing a Donna Reed Festival, and serving on the Foundation board of directors.

The Heritage Museum archives contain an amazing amount of material connected to Donna Reed's career and personal life. The artifacts come from her personal collections and donations by others over the past 25 years. The collection includes Donna's scrapbooks of articles, telegrams, and mementos from her career, and production files from *The Donna Reed Show* that include publicity and show design photos. The archives also include some private collections connected to Denison and Crawford County's local history.

The Heritage Museum Archive is a long-term project dedicated to archival preservation and information exchange. Past supported projects include creation of a temperature and humidity controlled archival storage room, special storage and cataloging supplies, and training in conservation and handling of museum materials. Jerry and Pam applied for a Historical Resource Development grant with the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs to continue this work. Jerry and Pam work to stabilize and catalog artifacts for efficient access and loan with other museums such as the Iowa State Historical Society in Des Moines and the It's a Wonderful Life Museum in Seneca Falls, New York. The Heritage Museum Archive has also contributed to media articles, scholarly research, and production of *The Donna Reed Show* DVD series.

Time and labor for these types of projects cost organizations a lot of money to carry out properly. But all of this work is done through dedicated volunteer work generously given to The Donna Reed Foundation and the public by Jerry and Pam. Their dedication and work is not only appreciated now, but will be appreciated for many years to come. Thank you!

-- Kurt Lee (photo courtesy Kurt Lee)



Jerry Peterman and Pam Soseman

"It's A Wonderful Life" 70th Anniversary in the Real Bedford Falls (Seneca Falls, NY)

It felt like stepping back to 1946 when I visited Seneca Falls, New York, for the first time. The community is full of architecture that makes you feel at home, especially if you love the movie "It's A Wonderful Life".

December 2016 was the 70th Anniversary of the movie and the celebration really took you back 70 years with vendors selling roasted chestnuts just outside the door of Martini's Bar. The Christmas decorations hanging across the uptown streets fit the times from the movie as well as greeting "George," "Mary," and other *IAWL* movie characters, all walking down the sidewalk, wishing everyone a Merry Christmas.

The community of Seneca Falls seemed to leave nothing out when giving us a wonderful experience for the anniversary celebration. There was something for everyone to enjoy, from the various vendors on the sidewalks to the radio play, *It's A Wonderful Life*, from 1947 and of course, the 5K Run/Walk that starts on the "Bedford Falls" bridge. Speakers for the two-day event included three of the Bailey children - Janie, Zuzu and little Tommy. To meet and speak with Carol Coombs (Janie), Karolyn Grimes (Zuzu) and Jimmy Hawkins (Tommy) was really memorable. It was also an honor to meet Monica Capra, the granddaughter of Frank Capra. She spoke about her grandfather and screened a fantastic documentary of Frank Capra's life. Our own Mary Owen spoke on numerous occasions about her mother's role as Mary Bailey and also about Donna's role in the organization, *Another Mother for Peace*.

The event was full of activities provided by a large group of volunteers, this year spearheaded by Anwei Law – and the *results were wonderful*. It reminded me of the great volunteer groups who put together our own original Donna Reed Festivals over the years. People coming together in these special ways really do make for *A Wonderful Life*.

-- Pat Fleshner (photo courtesy Pat Fleshner)

Built on Friendship

The more that I learn about Donna Reed, the more I am impressed by her personal value of friendship in her public and private life. Her professional life, by definition, attracted attention from the public at large, which she engaged with sincerity and interest. Yet from her private life - rich with family, friends, professional peers and partners – many of them share personal portraits of care, fairness, counsel, and mutual interests with Donna. I offer this because I think that our continuing work in the Donna Reed Foundation is supported by values of friendship for which, personally, I think Donna would have resonated with and approved. That said, I wanted to note the recent passing of some fellow Foundation friends, Dan Pfannebecker and Debbie Reynolds, to name a few. Dan Pfannebecker of Denison supported the Foundation as a past festival co-chair and on the board of directors. Debbie Reynolds, a Hollywood peer and friend of Donna Reed through work such as *Another Mother for Peace*, made a memorable impression at the 1988 Festival when she visited Denison. Thank you to them and all of our friends of the Donna Reed Foundation – you keep the torch of inspiration burning brightly as we share these memories moving forward.

--John Fujii, President, DRFPA (photos courtesy DRFPA)



Pat Fleshner and Monica Capra



Dan Pfannebecker, Debbie Reynolds



Hollywood in the Heartland - Des Moines, Iowa Oscar®, Copyright © A.M.P.A.S.

"Hollywood in the Heartland" Exhibit Extended

Hollywood in the Heartland opened at the State Historical Museum of Iowa in Des Moines in 2014. The exhibit interprets the role Iowa has played in the film industry. It prominently features Donna Reed's Oscar for *Best Supporting Actress* (1953) along with several items from the Donna Reed Heritage Museum/Archives – a leather script holder used by Donna Reed and a coffee mug given to her by John Wayne inscribed, "Donna from Duke." The exhibit has proven to be so popular that its run has extended to June 2018.

-- Jerry Peterman (photo courtesy State Historical Society of Iowa)

Donna Reed Heritage Museum/Archives Receives Grant

The Donna Reed Heritage Museum/Archives received a \$1,333 grant from the State Historical Society of Iowa in June 2016. The grant required a \$664 match from the Donna Reed Foundation and supported the purchase of museum-quality storage containers to properly protect the remaining two-thirds of the Donna Reed collection. That portion of the project has now been completed.

Included in the grant is work with the Nathan Mahrt Denison history collection and the Anna Mae Klinker hat collection. The grant also includes a survey of the collection to suggest future museum exhibits to the public.

In 2008, the Foundation received a grant from the State Historical Society of Iowa to develop an archival storage space and volunteer training to assess, conserve, and protect the collection. The space was finished in 2009 and the entire collection is secured in a climate-controlled environment.

-- Jerry Peterman (photo courtesy Jerry Peterman)



A Hollywood Star

This month's Donna Reed Heritage Museum window display features some of Donna Reed's early studio headshots from her archives (specialized portraits demonstrating a person's appearance for branding or casting features in a future production).

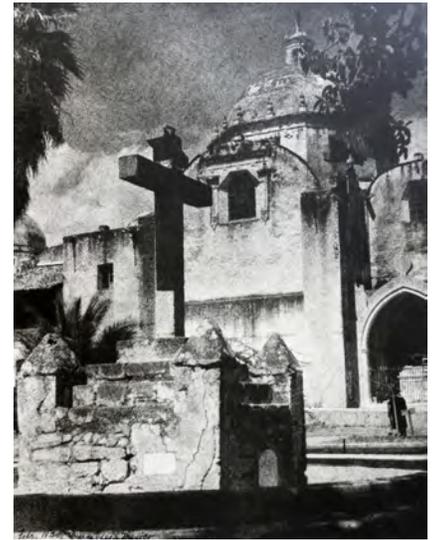
Also featured in the display are some of Donna's testimonial advertising campaigns. Testimonials are some of the oldest forms of advertising. These particular ads were paid celebrity endorsements that helped major studios increase their visibility in lucrative "crossover" deals with advertisers. Consumers, identifying with their cultural heroes, were enticed to prefer these products and services of the day. (Marketing tie-ins are often the driving reasons for entertainment today.)

The legacy of a star's work continues to evolve and find appreciation by new generations, especially in this day of expanded media, visibility, and connectivity by fans around the world. Let us know your interests and favorite memories of Donna!

-- John Fujii

Photographic Memories of Mom

As lifelong photographers, John Fujii and I often reflect upon mutual stories of photography in our lives when we meet in Denison. Photography was important to Mom as well from many different perspectives. For example, while rummaging around through stacks of pictures and papers, I came across old photos of us as kids living on Coldwater Canyon in Beverly Hills. There were proof sheets in the mix, views of Mom and us kids just hanging out in the main family room. It had bookshelves, a fireplace, and the black and white television we watched when Mom received her Oscar for Best Supporting Actress in *From Here to Eternity*. When I looked closer at the images, I realized they were professionally shot, likely for publicity or a magazine article down the road. The proofs still had Mom's grease pencil markings, indicating those images she approved for publication (as with most actors/actresses, Mom had final approval of such imagery). She was meticulous and expert with such imagery from years of practice and management.



Cuernavaca, Mexico - 1950

I continued to sort through the collection and encountered an old black and white print of a church building that I did not recognize. Gently handling the matte board, I dusted the image to get a better view. It was then that I realized there was a small, faded signature in the corner – *d. Reed, 1950*. I was stunned and got out a magnifying glass to verify Mom's handwriting. Yep, clearly her writing which also included another label – *Feb. 1950 - Cuernavaca, Mexico*. Wow!

As I looked at the image, I wondered to myself, *why did Mom give up her photography?* Well, why at least this type of image making? She was always a photographer, but she seemed mostly focused on her family, her kids, her relatives and important friends. I'm guessing now that some pictures of us as kids that I've found are images Mom took – they reflect certain personality traits of one's children only a parent could know and capture.

Talking with my sister Mary about the church image, she reminded me of Mom's international art tour trip in the 1970s that included India. Mom used a miniature Rollei 35mm camera on that trip. (Mary fondly calls that 'Mom's spy camera.') When Mom returned and previewed her trip images with family and friends, I realized Mom had not lost her *artistic eye*. No, it was definitely there. The images were wonderful and rich with stories, capturing architecture, people, and scenic views. Mom appreciated art and the artistic talent of others in many forms – filmmakers, painters, stage performers, photographers, and sculptors. In memory, I feel that her encouragement and influence helped develop my own artistic appreciation for the same.

– Tony Owen (photo by Donna Reed)



Remembering Debbie Reynolds

The entertainment world lost one of its great performers with the sudden death of Debbie Reynolds this last December. There was nobody quite like her, with her talent and presence on the screen. Debbie got her start at a young age, a story much like Donna Reed's own. Both attracted the attention of studios and agents after their beauty contest photos appeared in newspapers. Debbie had a couple of small parts in movies at Warner Brothers and then signed with

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Her breakout role was in the 1950 MGM movie, *Two Weeks with Love*, where she sang the famous *Aba Daba Honeymoon* duet with Carleton Carpenter. MGM's release of this song as a single ended up as #3 on Billboard's Best Selling Records chart. Her next major role was in the movie, *Singin' in the Rain*, with Gene Kelly and Donald O'Connor. She worked hard to learn the detailed dance routine alongside her partners, making it look like she had been dancing all of her life. Her memorable performance firmly established her as a big star.

(See Remembering Debbie Reynolds, page 5)



Volunteer Profile: Pat Fleshner

When Pat Fleshner was watching *The Donna Reed Show* as a girl growing up in Denison, she didn't know she would one day manage the foundation that honors the hometown star. After marrying and moving from Denison, Pat, with husband Lyle, returned to her and Donna Reed's hometown in 1989. In 1990, she started volunteering with the Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts and now serves on the board of directors. Pat was encouraged to volunteer in her community by her parents, the late Max and Marie Bilsten, who helped start the community theater, *Midwestern Players*.

Her mother also directed plays. "She was part of that for a long time," Pat said.

Pat has filled many roles with the Foundation over the years. "I did a lot of organizing for the performing arts workshops for a few years. I have been part of the Foundation for a long time." One of her earliest tasks was organizing a fashion show of Esther Williams Swimwear at the Denison Aquatics Center. Williams, the swimming star and actress, and Donna Reed were friends. "Esther Williams was going to be coming out that year for the Donna Reed Festival, but she couldn't. She made available her line of swimming suits so that we could have a style show as one of our activities during the festival."

After taking a hiatus, Pat returned to the Foundation to help organize the 2006 festival. The next year she joined the Foundation Board of Directors. "I always liked Donna Reed. I grew up watching the Donna Reed Show as a kid," she said. "I love it all. I really do," describing her work with the Foundation. "I love the fact that we have the theater building because it was part of my life for many years when I was a kid. I'm really pleased to be in this building. I love the fact that it is being used, not just that it was saved."

Pat never met Donna Reed, but her mother did, and she admires the Hollywood star for keeping her ties to Denison. "Donna was a fantastic person. She came back often. My mom met her in the 1980s and she was such a gracious person. Shelley Fabares talked about her, about how she was such a kind and caring person all of her life." Pat enjoys telling people about Donna Reed's personal story of success and how she is a role model. "The Foundation keeps the Donna Reed story alive," she said. Donna remained connected to the community long after she graduated and pursued opportunities outside of Denison.

"Today the Donna Reed Museum is an important part of the Foundation's work," Pat said, noting that Donna Reed fans from all over the country visit the museum and learn more about Donna Reed's life, career, and hometown. It is more than just tourism – it's history and opportunity in Western Iowa. Pat sees growth of the museum as a goal she would like to see achieved. "I'd love to see a larger amount of museum items on display, more than we are able to display in this shared space." She also enjoys organizing events and supporting tourism in the region. She looks forward to working with new volunteers as well. There is a busy road ahead for Pat and the rest of the Foundation.

-- Chuck Signs (Photo courtesy Chuck Signs)

(cont. - Remembering Debbie Reynolds)

Debbie continued on with many memorable performances including *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, *The Singing Nun*, and her role as Tammy in the movie *Tammy and the Bachelor* with Leslie Nielsen. Her record single for the title song for this film was a #1 hit for five weeks. By the early 1970s, she was in the Broadway musical revival of *Irene* and later created her own Las Vegas act. She also did voice work for cartoons including Charlotte of the 1973 classic, *Charlotte's Web*. (She had a large range of voices and accents from her years of work and could do a perfect imitation of Zsa Zsa Gabor).

Although younger than Donna, Debbie was friends with her and contributed to efforts such as *Another Mother for Peace*. It was an honor to have Debbie Reynolds appear in person at the Donna Reed Foundation for the Donna Reed Festival in the summer of 1988.

Debbie Reynolds had talent unlike any other performer – and a personality to match. She touched a lot of hearts and lives, personally and professionally and she will be missed by her fans worldwide.

-- Kurt Lee (photos courtesy DRFPA)





Donna Reed
1921 - 1986

- Actress
- Producer
- Activist
- Mother
- Friend
- Role model

Donna Reed touched many lives with her talent, integrity, and humanity. Born Donnabelle Mullenger near Denison, Iowa, she was an award-winning actress, pioneering executive producer, activist leader, and loving parent. Started as a film festival and scholarship fund in 1986, today's nonprofit Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts perpetuates her spirit for excellence in education and community.

Membership Renewal

Have you renewed your membership today? Consider gift memberships, too. Since 1986, your contributions have made the difference with our volunteer-driven work and goals.

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DRFPA AT A GLANCE

Important dates for the DRFPA. More detail available at DonnaReed.org.

January

[1] - 2017 Iowa Merit Awards for Drama announced

February

[9] - Wesco Day Hab Movie

March

[2] - Crawford County Arts Council

[24] - Cowboy Brad/John Denver

April

[22] - Crawford County Arts Council

May

[14] **Mother's Day / DRFPA Membership month - renew today!**

[31] - 2017 Iowa Merit Awards for Drama deadline

June

[12-16] - Children's Musical Theater

[14] - Billy McGuigan Concert/DRF Fundraiser

[17] - Wedding

[21,22] - Lincoln Hwy Assoc. Tour/Screening

July

[19] - Allied Tours/Screening

August

• - open

September

• - open

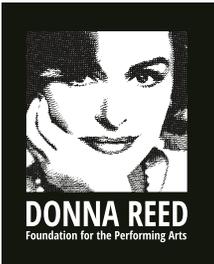
October

[26] - Allied Tours/Screening

[30] - Crawford County Arts Council

November

[17] - Crawford County Arts Council



The Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts

1305 Broadway

Denison, IA 51442-1923

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www.DonnaReed.org





DONNA REED
Foundation for the Performing Arts



NEWS FROM THE RED CARPET

Member Newsletter of the Donna Reed Foundation - 2017 - Issue 2

WELCOMING AUTUMN AT THE DRFPA.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- A Unique Find
- Convention Days
- AnnieKIDS
- Merit Awards
- Goodbye to a Friend
- Profile - Donna Meinen
- DRFPA at a Glance

WITH APPRECIATION

Thank you always to all of our members, contributors, volunteers, and sponsors. With this issue, special thanks to:

- Gai Jones
- Crawford County Community Foundation
- Donna Meinen
- Jerry Peterman
- Kenny Kahl
- Nathan Mahrt
- Pam Soseman
- Pat and Lyle Fleshner
- Steve Brownmiller
- Allison Rasmussen
- Roy and Ann Voggeser

A Unique Find

Josie Kinnear, from southern California, contacted The Donna Reed Foundation to share that she'd found something special inside a vintage book, *Beyond This Place*, by A.J. Cronin. She had purchased the book at St. Anne's Thrift Store in Burbank for an art project.

Flipping through the book she unexpectedly found two letters to Jimmy Hawkins from young fans. The letters were post marked 1954 when Jimmy was just 12 years old. Jimmy portrayed Tagg Oakley, Annie Oakley's kid brother, on the popular television series, *Annie Oakley*, starring Gail Davis. Josie also found a Work Permit issued by the Los Angeles Board of Education that permitted Jimmy school absences for acting obligations. She felt these items would certainly have sentimental value for Jimmy and wanted to try to return them to him.

Jimmy was pleased to hear about the discovery and touched that Josie wanted to return them. He decided to meet her and thank her personally. Josie was elated to have the chance to hand Jimmy the mementos in person and that he would actually visit her home!

Upon meeting, Jimmy shared with Josie and her family that his mom had passed away last year and that some of her belongings were donated to St. Anne's Thrift Store. She had dedicated over 50 years of volunteer work to St. Anne's Maternity Ward Home. Jimmy said, "Josie and her family are wonderful people with a lot of warmth in their home and went out of their way to make me feel welcome. They extended an open invitation for dinner... love Italian!" Josie said, "Jimmy was so kind and just lovely to visit with. He was just as amazing as I knew he would be!" Josie's husband, Sean, and children, Owen and Rory, were also on hand to meet Jimmy and capture the event with a few photos.

Jimmy Hawkins is a longtime friend of The Donna Reed Foundation as one of the original founders of The Donna Reed Festival and past Board Member. He has a deep connection to Donna Reed, appearing as her son, Tommy Bailey, in *It's a Wonderful Life*, as well as a recurring role of George/Scotty, Mary Stone's (Shelley Fabares) boyfriend for eight seasons of *The Donna Reed Show*.

You've heard the saying "Never judge a book by its cover"? How true! You just never know what you'll find inside.

--Donna Meinen (Photos courtesy of Josie Kinnear)



Josie Kinnear and Jimmy Hawkins



Convention Days: July 14-16, 2017

Women's Rights National Historical Park, Seneca Falls, NY

Convention Days is an annual celebration of women's rights that includes speakers, films, events and panel discussions. Sponsored by the IDEA Center for the Voices of Humanity, I was invited to *Convention Days* to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of *Another Mother for Peace* and talk about Mom's involvement against the war in Vietnam. AMP, as it's also known, was "founded in 1967 to educate women to take an active role in eliminating war as a means of solving disputes between nations, people and ideologies." Mom became connected with AMP through her good friend Barbara Avedon. Barbara began her career in television by writing and directing episodes of *The Donna Reed Show*. After the show ended in 1966, Barbara and Donna remained good friends. They both had sons who were of draft age and by 1966, over two hundred thousand American troops were fighting in South Vietnam. In addition to ending the war, *Another Mother for Peace* campaigned to establish a Secretary and a Department of Peace at the cabinet level! It is still a good idea.

Some of you may remember the logo that was synonymous with AMP: the yellow backed sunflower that read: "War is not healthy for Children and other living things". Designed by artist Lorraine Schneider in 1967 in response to the war in Vietnam, Schneider entered a small print titled "Primer" to a miniature print show at Pratt Institute in New York. The only entry criterion was each submitted work could not exceed four square inches. With the war uppermost on her mind, Schneider made what she called her own "personal picket sign," recalls her daughter Carol Schneider. And because she had to work in such a tiny format "it had to say something, something logical, something irrefutable and so true that no one in the world could say that it was not so," explained Schneider in a 1972 address before the United Nations Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, Switzerland. Since it was the "flower power" era, she drew a sunflower and surrounded it in roughly scrawled lettering the phrase "War is Not Healthy for Children and Other Living Things." Lorraine's daughter, Susie, participated in the 50th anniversary celebration and it was an honor to meet and get to know her. Her mother was an activist artist and even though her protest design didn't win the competition at Pratt, she won a much larger prize.

Former Donna Reed Festival alum, Lloyd Schwartz, was also in attendance, premiering his one-woman play titled *Independence. Dr. Mary Walker: The Untold Story of An American Hero*. Written and directed by Lloyd, and starring actress Kathie Barnes, Dr. Mary Walker (1832-1919) was an abolitionist, the second women in America to receive a medical doctor's degree. She was an assistant surgeon and then a prisoner during the Civil War. Dr. Walker grew up working on her family's farm and was never comfortable in woman's dress. She was arrested more than once for "impersonating a man" wearing long pants. Towards the end of her life she worked for the Post Office and invented the idea of using a return address on an envelope. Not only was it wonderful to see Lloyd and his wife Barbara Mallory, the play was interesting, engaging and inventive.

-- Mary Owen (photos courtesy Mary Owen)



Children's Musical Theater Workshop Dreams Big with "AnnieKIDS" Production

AnnieKIDS stretched imaginations as much as it did enrollment in the 2017 Children's Musical Theater Workshop. 62 students from 43 families converged on Denison from many surrounding communities and Council Bluffs, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Denver, Colorado. The workshop allowed young performers (grades K-8) to experience the basics of musical theater and practice storytelling through song, dance, and acting. Legions of volunteers rallied to help production, execution (lighting, sound, stage management), costuming, decoration, publicity, and achievement awards programs. Five days of intense study and practice of music, choreography, and spoken dialog culminated in a massive Saturday performance. The results are always astounding for the students and families in attendance.

Allison Rasmussen, a Manilla, Iowa native and instructional coach at the Waverly-Shell Rock Community Schools in northeastern Iowa, returned to helm this ambitious production (her eleventh year with the Donna Reed Foundation's Children's Musical Theater Workshop). For Allison, this was a bittersweet time as well, for it would be her last production as this workshop's director. "So many good memories," she reflected in an online note, "So much growth in kids." She praised her students, volunteers, friends, and family for their support and excellence. "... I wouldn't have given up a second of the time I spent with the Children's Musical Theater Workshop... Many years it meant spending my birthday with a crop of 5 to 12 year olds and I wouldn't have had it any other way. Thank you for having me along for the ride. It's been quite a trip!"

The Donna Reed Foundation promotes excellence in performing arts and community, and has sponsored the week-long Children's Musical Theater Workshop since 2005. The legacy continues with this great work.

-- John Fujii (photos courtesy Ann Voggeser)

Photos of AnnieKIDS can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/y7fpfnrf>



Written in the Stars

Donna Reed dedicated a lifetime to writing letters to people all around the world. She maintained a 48 year pen-pal friendship with Violet Lindsay of Pittsburgh. She kept in touch with her family and friends through letters and cards. She wrote back to countless military service members throughout World War II, a fraction of those letters only recently discovered respectfully and modestly among her personal effects. She helped champion massive letter writing campaigns with *Another Mother for Peace*. She patiently researched her genealogy through the reach of a telephone and an electric Smith Corona typewriter.

"I can still remember her banging away on that thing," her son, Tony, shared with me, "and she insisted that we learn to type, too."

The power of connections and the personal letter were strong with Donna, even as we continue to discover more of her writings. Now, more than ever, I think that letter writing is time well spent.

-- John Fujii

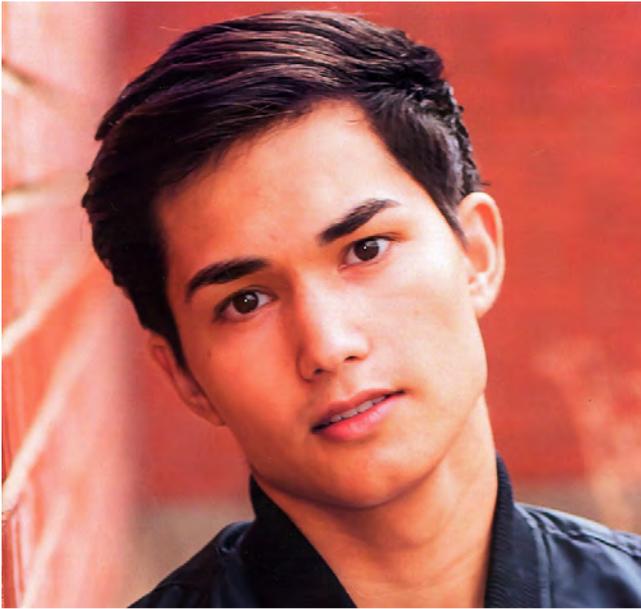


Photo courtesy Alex Packard

2017 Merit Award Recipient Alex Packard

Alexander Packard of Davenport, Iowa, was the Merit Award recipient in the category of dramatic performance for 2017. Alex plans to pursue a BFA at Baldwin Wallace University, starting in August of this year. One of his main goals in his continuing education is to prepare himself for the real world as a working performer. This includes finding effective mentors, growing his understanding of the business side of acting, and remaining well rounded in his pursuits.

Whether he works in TV, on Broadway, film, or doing voice over work, his desire is to be a successful performer. The DRFPA wishes Alex and all previous Merit Award recipients, continued success in their pursuits in the performing arts.

-- Tony Owen



Photo from DRFPA

Saying Goodbye to a Friend: Stephanie Poggensee

The Donna Reed Foundation has been very fortunate to have had many friends in its more than 30 years in operation. Some were from far away and some lived in Denison. Recently we lost one more of our Denison friends.

Volunteer, Stephanie Poggensee passed away in July this year. Stephanie was actually with us from the beginning. She wanted to do her part, so she began taking pictures and saving newspaper clippings from the very first Donna Reed Festival. She wanted everyone to remember what happened and who the visitors were during the years of the festival. From the Scholarship performances, to the Gala, to the farm visits, she tried to capture it all.

As she had the pictures printed (that's what we did in those days) and the articles clipped, she decided to keep a record of it all and so began her scrapbooks. Every so often, Stephanie presented a very large scrapbook to the Foundation office.

Through the years, Stephanie provided a total of 10 extremely full scrapbooks to The Donna Reed Foundation. These books give us a wonderful visual memory of the wide variety of activities and the great friends we made during the Donna Reed Festivals.

The Foundation is very grateful to Stephanie for the many dedicated hours and money that she spent on these books and we will use them for years to come.

-- Pat Fleshner



Photo from DRFPA

Volunteer Profile: Donna Meinen

Donna Meinen began as a volunteer for The Donna Reed Foundation, but that initial commitment evolved into her current position as the Foundation's office manager.

Donna originally became familiar with Donna Reed in 2006 when her daughter, who was in 4th grade at the time, chose to write a report and portray Donna Reed for a "Notable Iowan" project for school. She said she had seen the movie *It's a Wonderful Life* but she learned so much more about Donna Reed through her daughter's assignment.

"I was introduced to The Donna Reed Foundation through former board member Nancy Westerberg when she asked if I would like to volunteer in the concession stand at The Donna Reed Festival in 2009." Since that time she continued to volunteer and was a member of the board of directors for several years.

"These days, I like to say that I'm a part-time employee and part-time volunteer for The Donna Reed Foundation. Besides working part time at the foundation, I help with the events at the theater in the evenings as well as volunteering for the week during Donna Reed's Children's Musical Theater Workshop." Donna is one of the coordinators of the workshop along with longtime volunteer Jerry Peterman.

Besides general office management, Donna also gives tours to visitors to Denison. "I really like meeting new people and sharing Donna Reed's legacy with them." She assists in lining up performances at The Donna Reed Theater and promoting The Donna Reed Museum. "I've even gotten to dabble in creating ads and posters for some of our events, which is fun!"

Donna maintains the gift shop's memorabilia and looks for new items to add to the variety of Donna Reed and *It's a Wonderful Life* items that are for sale in the museum. "We recently added a new ornament to our collection. A visitor to the museum informed me that the bell that was used in the movie *It's a Wonderful Life* is still being produced by the same family owned (since 1832) factory in Connecticut. The bells are inscribed with the movie's title on one side and I collaborated with their art department to have "The Donna Reed Museum, Denison, Iowa imprinted on the reverse side. The bells have been a huge hit and we have placed several large orders," Donna said.

"I am proud to tell visitor's about Denison native, Donna Reed. She valued family, a meaningful education and helping others. After Donna became a sensation in Hollywood she never forgot her roots in her hometown as evidenced by returning to Denison often to visit family, help raise funds for area community colleges and to sell war bonds. Ultimately, she left her Oscar®, that she was awarded for her supporting role in *From Here to Eternity*, to the city of Denison."

– Chuck Signs (Photos courtesy of DRFPA)



"Every time a bell rings, . . ."

Photo from DRFPA



Donna Reed
1921 - 1986

- **Actress**
- **Producer**
- **Activist**
- **Mother**
- **Friend**
- **Role model**

Donna Reed touched many lives with her talent, integrity, and humanity. Born Donnabelle Mullenger near Denison, Iowa, she was an award-winning actress, pioneering executive producer, activist leader, and loving parent. Started as a film festival and scholarship fund in 1986, today's nonprofit Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts perpetuates her spirit for excellence in education and community.

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DRFPA AT A GLANCE

Important dates for the DRFPA. More detail available at DonnaReed.org.

October

[26] - Allied Tours/Screening

[28] - Halloween Indie Films

[30] - Crawford County Arts

Council, "Derick Nelson &

Family"

November

[5] - Ten Pointe End of Season Party / Jen Kropf (tentative)

[12] - Ten Pointe End of Season Party / Jen Kropf (tentative)

[17] - Crawford County Arts Council, "Roy & Rosemary"

December

[9] CDC Kids movie (tentative)

[16] - Elvis Show (tentative)

[17] - *It's A Wonderful Life* - *free screenings - 3pm & 7pm*

January

[29] - Donna Reed's Birthday Event

February

• - *open*

March

• - *open*

April

[9] - Crawford County Arts Council, "Cahal Dunne"

May

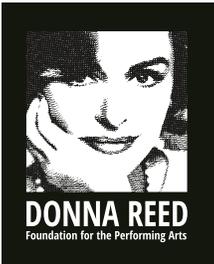
[8] - Crawford County Arts Council, "Scarborough Fair"

[19] - Mystery Tour/Fancy Free Co. (tentative)

[20] - Graduation in Lobby

June

• [TBD] - Children's Musical Theater Workshop



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Foundation for the Performing Arts



The
DONNA REED
Show
1958 - 1966
Celebrating 60 Years



NEWS FROM THE RED CARPET

Member Newsletter of the Donna Reed Foundation - 2018 - Issue 1

SUMMER TIME AT THE DRFPA.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- New Denison Neighbors
- CMT Gallery
- The Jungle Book
- Donna and Robin
- The Dream is Alive
- Donna Centennial
- DRFPA at a Glance

WITH APPRECIATION

Thank you always to all of our members, contributors, volunteers, and sponsors. With this issue, special thanks to:

- Crawford County Community Foundation
- Denison Rotary Club
- Laurel Olsen
- Donna Meinen
- Jerry Peterman
- Pam Soseman
- Allison Rasmussen
- Roy and Ann Voggeser

New Denison Neighbors

Honored as one of the most influential casting directors in Hollywood, Eddie Foy III and his wife, Jan, recently settled in retirement in Denison, Iowa. This follows a longtime admiration and respect for Donna Reed, and an equally long devotion to the Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts as leader, instructor, and supporter of its 30 year mission.

"We checked out lots of places after we both retired and we wanted to spend our good years here. We love Denison. The people in this town are so outstanding. Everybody smiles. Cronk's is wonderful." A foundation volunteer for many years, Eddie looks



Jan and Eddie Foy III

forward to devoting even more time to Foundation and Denison activities.

Eddie carries on a long line of show business tradition, starting with his grandfather's Vaudeville act that later inspired a movie comedy classic, *The Seven Little Foys*, with Bob Hope. Eddie began his career acting in such films as *Run Silent, Run Deep* with Clark Gable and Burt Lancaster. He later pursued casting. It was Foy's work casting *The Donna Reed Show* that he cites as a turning point in his casting director career. "In 43 years of casting, it was one of four or five highlights in my career. And I credit Donna and Tony [Owen] for helping establish myself within the casting industry." Eddie's extensive casting credits for television include *M.A.S.H.* (pilot), *Naked City*, *Route 66*, *Dennis the Menace*, *Cheers*, *The Monkees*, and the daytime television parody, *Soap*.

"Donna Reed," Eddie said, "was a lady, extremely dignified, so professional, with a sense of humor. You could tell she was from the Midwest. She treated the whole crew on *The Donna Reed Show* with the dignity and class of her family. He [Tony Owen] was just the same." Foy appreciates that the Donna Reed Foundation continues to keep her legacy alive. "These guys love what they are doing. They are keeping the wonderful history of Donna Reed. Why not? She's one of the best we ever had."

-- Chuck Signs (photo courtesy Jan Foy)



By The Numbers

- 52 students from 39 families
- Communities represented - *Aspinwall, Charter Oak, Correctionville, Council Bluffs, Danbury, Deloit, Denison, Dow City, Gowrie, Ida Grove, Kiron, Manning, Odebolt, Schleswig, Sioux Center, Ute, Vail, Waverly*
- 11 Achievement Awards
- 294 performance attendance
- 36 performance DVDs ordered

2018 Children's Musical Theater Workshop

Thank you to all of the volunteers, participants, parents, and attendees for a successful workshop. This year's workshop production of *Disney's The Jungle Book, KIDS* was coached and directed by Laurel Olsen.

The production crew included Trisha Boettger, Jared Jochum, Wanda Johnson, Brooke Kropf, Aaron Larson, Cierra Larson, Julie Leed, Jack MacGregor, Tara Meinen, Tracy Mendlik, Tylor Schulte, Annie Schrum, Alivia Snowgren, Taylor Towne, and Roy Voggeser.

The scholarship program was handled by Wanda Johnson and Allison Rasmussen.

Office support was provided by Robin Bohlin, Donna Meinen, Jerry Peterman and Ann Voggeser.

Donna Meinen and Jerry Peterman coordinated the workshop. The workshop wouldn't be possible without this dedicated team of volunteers - *thank you!*

-- *Donna Reed Foundation*

"The Jungle Book, KIDS" Musical Theatre Workshop - That's a wrap!

This year's Children's Musical Theatre Workshop for students in Kindergarten through 8th grade took place June 11th through the 15th. After five days of rehearsing to learn lines, choreography and songs, fifty-two excited and energetic kids took the stage for a public performance of *Disney's The Jungle Book, KIDS* on Saturday, June 16th at 2:30 pm at Denison High School. Students engaged in the workshop were from Denison and surrounding communities and as far away as Council Bluffs and Waverly, Iowa. The audience, of nearly 300, was entertained by familiar characters like Mowgli, Ballou and Shere Kahn as well as snappy tunes such as "The Bare Necessities".

After being involved in the workshop for many years in other capacities, Laurel Olsen, who is a Language Arts instructor at Denison Community High School, took the helm as director AND choreographer for the week long workshop and performance and did a fantastic job! She is also a speech coach for Denison Community High School and has directed plays at the high school level. Laurel stated "I really enjoyed directing *The Jungle Book, KIDS!* We had a talented group of kids who learned quickly and were lots of fun to work with. Thanks to all the volunteers who came together to make the show a success!"

The previous director, Allison Rasmussen, who had directed the last 11 years, was on hand to be a part of the judging panel for this year's talent auditions for achievement awards that were donated by a generous anonymous donor. Thank you to Allison for all your years of being there for the foundation and the kids!!

Each year The Donna Reed Foundation depends on many wonderful volunteers to fill positions from director, choreographer, lights and sound, music, make up crew, set design, costume crew and production assistants. The volunteers are made up of adults along with high school and college students. It simply couldn't happen without them! Everyone works very hard and diligently through the week to make it a memorable experience for the students. The foundation is so very thankful for these folks giving of their time and talent!

The Donna Reed Foundation's Children's Musical Theatre Workshop and production of *The Jungle Book, KIDS* was a delight!

-- Donna Meinen (photos courtesy Ann Voggeser)



1958 World Series

A week before the New York Yankees faced the Milwaukee Braves, Donna Reed launched her own world series with the premier of *The Donna Reed Show* on September 24, 1958 on ABC. Over 8 seasons and 275 episodes, the sitcom gave us the Stone family as they grew and evolved with time and circumstance. More importantly, some timeless themes have entertained new audiences and geographies over six decades through the advent of reruns, syndication, and ultimately digital media such as DVDs and Internet streaming.

The reach and impact of *The Donna Reed Show* is strengthened not only by its continued availability but also the more remarkable ability to have a *relationship* with any episode or season. Viewers today can own, replay, examine and enjoy these stories at any time, any venue, and most certainly any sequence they choose on almost an infinite variety of delivery mediums (TV, computer, phone, etc). Just as the Stones evolved, our relationship to them continues to change and grow, too. *Amazing!*
-- John Fujii

Farewell - Donna Meinen

It has been a joy working with Donna Meinen as our office manager for the Foundation. Donna started part time in March 2015 and had her last working day on March 30, 2018. She has volunteered with the Foundation since 2009. All who walked in the Foundation door noticed her pleasantness and smile immediately.

Donna promptly learned all of the ins and outs of the office and became a natural guide for museum and theater tours. Though she had not worked with our computer accounting programs before, she learned quickly and even created an inventory control system for the museum gift shop, greatly improving our memorabilia tracking.

Donna shared that she is pleased about her work and accomplishments for the office to further the Foundation goals of raising funds and using the theater building. "I really enjoyed reviewing artists to bring to the Donna Reed Theater stage and working on all of the various performances." Donna not only helped organize the events but even volunteered to support the performances so the evenings ended smoothly for all involved.

"I feel that I've gained a lot of experience that I can use in the future," Donna said. For now, she continues to volunteer with the Foundation by supporting the organization of the summer Children's Musical Theater workshop and performance. She and her husband, Steve, also plan to spend a lot of time going to events as their daughters are now in college – Tara and Kelley are both very talented and will keep Donna and Steve busy traveling to their various college performances.

So we say thank you to Donna Meinen for all that she brought to the Foundation and wish her the best in enjoying her time "off."

-- Pat Fleshner



*Robin Bohlin and Donna Meinen
(photo courtesy Pat Fleshner)*

Welcome - Robin Bohlin

Robin began her position as part-time Office Manager for the Foundation in March of this year. She previously worked for Cogdill Farm Supply in Dow City for about ten years. She enjoyed her job there but her work location changed last year. Hoping to return to class work she had begun at WIT Community College, she started looking for part-time work in Denison and found our posting. Her work as the office manager at Cogdill dealt a lot with bookkeeping, so she was able to make a smooth transition with her accounting experience to learning the Foundation's different management software.

Robin is looking forward to learning new things dealing with the performing arts. "I enjoy working with people and the environment at The Donna Reed Foundation is lighter than my previous job." She is currently learning more about Donna Reed and the Foundation to comfortably help give museum tours in the future. "I really enjoy watching Roy and Pat give tours," she said. "One of these days I'll get it."

Robin lives with her husband, Scott and son, Connor, in Arion, Iowa. Scott is retired Air Force Security Forces and now works as a Safety Manager for a business in Woodbine, Iowa. Robin's son Connor graduated in May from Boyer Valley High School. He will soon join the Navy and start his Engineering Training as a Gas Turbine Systems Technician (GSE) for electrical and propulsion systems in August. Her older son, Brendan, lives in Lincoln, Nebraska and works for a web design company.

Welcome to the Foundation family, Robin.

-- Pat Fleshner

The Dream is Alive

Check out the The Donna Reed Foundation Blogspot - <http://donnareedfoundation.blogspot.com> - and follow some of our many Foundation scholarship recipients as they continue to inspire with their craft and gifts. *As featured top to bottom, left to right:*

- **Kari Wahlgren** (1995 Acting/Vocal) was recently featured on Warner Brothers Home Entertainment's series – *Dorothy and The Wizard of Oz: We're not in Kansas Anymore* – on DVD and digital DVD.
- **Mekia Cox** (1999 Musical Theater) was featured as Tiana/Sabin in *ONCE UPON A TIME* on ABC Friday nights in its seventh and final season.
- **Ben Rappaport** (2004 Acting) was featured as lawyer Seth Oliver on the ABC drama, *For the People*.
- **Jeff Tomsic** (1995 Film) had his feature film debut with the life inspired comedy, *Tag*.
- **Preston Truman Boyd** (2004 Vocal and Musical Theater) just closed his Broadway play, *The Play That Goes Wrong* – it will open again at the Lyceum Theatre in 2019.
- **Saycon Sengbloh** (1996 Acting and Musical Theater) starred in the Off-Broadway revival of Pulitzer Prize winner Suzan-Lori Parks' *In the Blood*.

Thank you to volunteer Jerry Peterman for his updates on this stream.

-- Donna Reed Foundation

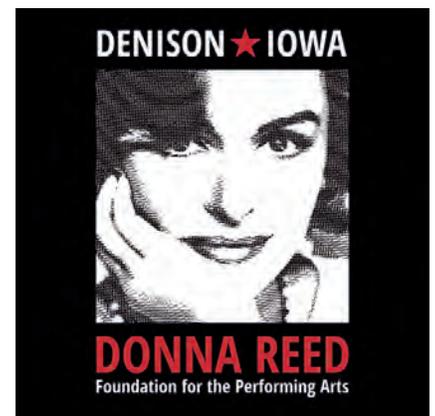


Donna Reed Centennial Ahead

In our Foundation hearts, Donna Reed is alive and well as she inspires new students, professionals, friends and family from around the country and the world at large. In Denison, we are celebrating volunteer successes such as the annual Children's Musical Theater Workshop and newly enhanced sound systems to the Donna Reed Theater (supported by Crawford County Community Foundation and Denison Rotary Club) that will give back to the community and all who enjoy that space. (Phase one of the sound system inaugurated with the massive RAGBRAI event of July to rave reviews.) Plans are afoot for a 60th anniversary celebration of *The Donna Reed Show* in Denison on Friday, 5 October 2018, between 7-9pm along with an appreciation gathering for all volunteers (past and present!) and members of the Donna Reed Foundation. Work continues to support tourism visitors, museum displays, membership, and fundraising at a number of levels. At a national level, an anniversary book for *The Donna Reed Show* is in development and Seneca Falls, New York, will again celebrate Donna Reed and *It's a Wonderful Life* in early December.

You continue to make the Donna Reed Foundation thrive and reach new generations. Please get involved and lend your support where you can - it is greatly appreciated. Together we will see Donna's centennial and well beyond – *thank you!*

-- John Fujii, President, DRFPA





Donna Reed
1921 - 1986

- **Actress**
- **Producer**
- **Activist**
- **Mother**
- **Friend**
- **Role model**

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DRFPA AT A GLANCE

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September

[13] - Clay Adams / Direct Support Prof. Week

[28] - Michael Mundt 60th Class Reunion

October

[5] - *DR Show 60th Anniversary Celebration / Volunteer Appreciation at DR Theater*

October

[6] - Crawford County Arts Council, "7th Avenue"

November

[8] - Crawford County Arts Council, "Todd Oliver"

December

[16] - *It's a Wonderful Life - free screenings - 3pm & 7pm*

January

[TBD] - *Donna Reed's Birthday Event*

February

• - open

March

[8] - Crawford County Arts Council, "Charlie Albright"

April

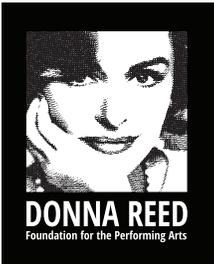
[25] - Crawford County Arts Council, "Holy Rocka Rollaz"

May

• - open

June

[TBD] - *Children's Musical Theater Workshop*



The Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts

1305 Broadway

Denison, IA 51442-1923

PH: +1.712.263.3334 EM: info@donnareed.org

www.DonnaReed.org





DONNA REED
Foundation for the Performing Arts

Actress

Producer

Activist

Mother

Friend



NEWS FROM THE RED CARPET

Member Newsletter of the Donna Reed Foundation - 2019 - Issue 1

WINTER REVIEW AT THE DRFPA.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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- CMT Gallery
- Willy Wonka
- Julie and Matt
- Unscreen Donna
- Thank You
- Bedford Falls
- DRFPA at a Glance

WITH APPRECIATION

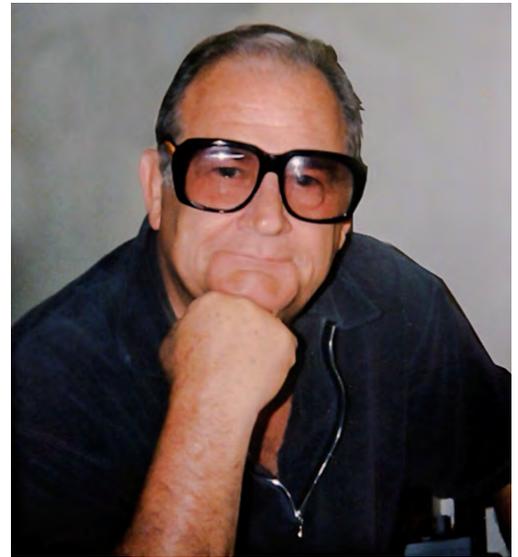
Thank you always to all of our members, contributors, volunteers, and sponsors. With this issue, special thanks to:

- Crawford County Community Foundation
- Robin Bohlin
- Denison Rotary Club
- Laurel Olsen
- Jerry Peterman
- Tylor Schulte
- Pam Soseman
- Roy and Ann Voggeser

Eddie Foy Remembered

The Donna Reed Foundation, Denison, and the world lost a great friend in Eddie Foy III a year ago this November after an accidental fall. Relocated in March 2018, Eddie and his wife, Jan, continued to grow their roots in the community they came to love from decades of visits to friends there. "Moving to Denison, Iowa, was one of the best decisions that Eddie and I made after we retired," said Jan Foy. "He was so happy and excited about the possibilities."

Tributes and remembrances continue to flow in about Eddie. Fran Silau feels his presence every day, reflecting on the inspiration and 23-year friendship he had with Eddie since his earliest



Eddie Foy III

Festival class on stage presence. "He was the first person outside of my immediate family who cared about my hopes and dreams, my love for the history of entertainment, and to believe that a career in this industry was possible." Denison friends speak of him in the present, alive and energized with enthusiasm for his next ideas and experiences in development.

Eddie continues to share insights and challenges us through his autobiography, "Show Business, The Foy Way." Besides candid recall of his work and life, readers also find life lessons on business and friendship, integrity, leadership, perseverance, and, ultimately, love in its many forms. Eddie regularly professed his admiration and respect for Donna Reed and Tony Owen. One of his signature moments with Donna was when she told her director over a difference of opinion, "Listen to him. Tony and I trust this man." Eddie always honored her for that turn in his career.

The spirit of Eddie Foy lives on in Denison, Iowa. The Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts will dedicate its theater stage to his memory. The windows of the Donna Reed Museum featured a temporary display dedicated to three generations of the Foy family. Jan Foy reflected on this. "Walking past those windows one day, I gazed at an enlarged photo of Eddie looking over his big glasses. His icy blue eyes just penetrated me. I slowly walked away, feeling alone and very sad. Then I saw his hand prints nearby and I pressed my hands into his prints. As I did, I felt the warmth of the sun on my face and I felt him with me. Yes, Denison, Iowa, is my new home because this is where I feel Eddie with me."

-- Donna Reed Foundation



Photos courtesy Ann Voggesser

By The Numbers

- 53 students from 37 families
- Communities represented - *Aspinwall, Charter Oak, Denison, Kiron, Schleswig, Vail, Council Bluffs, Ida Grove, Manning, and Odebolt.*
- 10 Achievement Awards
- 253 performance attendance
- Financial support - Crawford County Bank, Walmart. Costume support - Crawford County Memorial Hospital.

2019 Children's Musical Theater Workshop

Thank you to all of the volunteers, participants, parents, and attendees for a successful workshop. This year's workshop production of *Willy Wonka, KIDS* was coached and directed by Laurel Olsen. Tylor Schulte was the vocal director and handled sound.

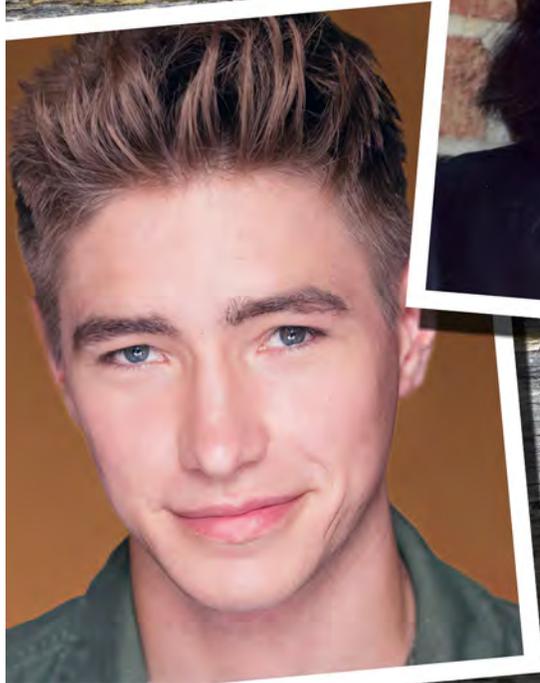
The production crew included Trisha Boettger, Taylor Brokowski, Cassidy Bradley, Maggie Chapman, Alix Harms, Brooke Kropf, Cierra Larson, Jack MacGregor, and Roy Voggesser.

The Merit Award judges were Taylor Towne and Beth Vogt.

Office support was provided by Robin Bohlin, Jerry Peterman and Ann Voggesser.

Robin Bohlin and Jerry Peterman coordinated the workshop. The workshop wouldn't be possible without this dedicated team of volunteers and the broader community support - *Thank you!*

-- *Donna Reed Foundation*



2019 Drama Merit Awards Honor Julie Matta and Matt Moran

Iowa students Julie Matta of Toledo and Matt Moran of Clive were selected as 2019 Merit Award honorees in the category of dramatic performance this year after a spirited jury process of excellent submissions. First-place honoree, Julie Matta, will graduate as a senior from South Tama County High School in 2020. An active leader in her thespian, choir, and student government groups, she is also a seasoned performer in numerous school productions and an all-state honoree in speech and writing. Based upon feedback from many sources, Julie will be one to watch in 2020!

Matt Moran graduated as a senior from Urbandale High School in 2019 and looks to further combine his passions for acting and public service in his college journey and beyond. Also a seasoned veteran of many performances and work/study in NYC and Los Angeles, he is especially excited to continue development of a youth empowerment initiative that he founded called U MATTER. The DRFPA wishes Julie, Matt, and all participants continued success in their pursuits and contributions to the performing arts.

-- Tony Owen



Unscreen Donna

For many of us, the name Donna Reed conjures up favorite moments in movies and television over a vast lifetime of performances. Did you know, however, that she also acted on radio as well? Brenda Scott Royce notes in her book, *Donna Reed: A Bio-Bibliography* (1990), that Donna performed in at least 31 different radio theater and other segments between 1944-1954. Her roles even included radio adaptations of Mary Hatch for *It's a Wonderful Life* broadcasts.

More importantly, this leads us to realize the Donna Reed most of us never saw but can more fully appreciate today. She inspires us with behind-the-camera work as a pioneering executive or veteran letter writer for WWII combatants or *Another Mother for Peace* or even as private artist photographer who not only honed her craft but encouraged others to do the same.

Donna Reed is part of a new age of discovery because her timeless work, actions, and values fit well with new media and the connections they can create. Only by sharing will we really begin to see the rest of Donna Reed.

-- John Fujii



Award photo courtesy the Denison Bulletin & Review; Denison Riders photo courtesy Pat Fleshner; National Volunteer Appreciation photos courtesy Ann Voggesser; Sound system courtesy the Donna Reed Foundation

Thank You – Never Ending Appreciation

This update is long in coming but no less important or deeply felt by the members and supporters of the Donna Reed Foundation. Since 1986, we continue to work together towards excellence, community, discovery, and inspiration by Donna Reed and the broader constellation of caring people she interconnected us with nearly a century after she was born. The mosaic above is only a tiny example of this dedication. The sound system upgrades for the Donna Reed Theatre continue to enhance the utilization of the space based upon grants from the Crawford County Community Foundation and Denison Rotary Club. After the successful 2018 RAGBRAI event hosted by Denison, the Denison RAGBRAI Committee awarded the DRFPA a grant that the Foundation is developing to further attract visitors to the Denison area and the Donna Reed Theatre and Museum. For National Volunteer Week in April, the DRFPA celebrated a thank you in the theatre lobby with wonderful treats by Kathy Hasik and the Bake Shop and Hollywood Café.

The celebration of "thank you" is never ending in the work and friendship that we achieve together. I see it in Donna's work, life, letters, and family/friends she left behind for us. There is certainly more yet to come. *Thank you for your continued support and kindness.*

-- John Fujii, President, DRFPA



The Bedford Falls of the film closely mirrors many features of Seneca Falls including the Bridge Street canal bridge that honors real-life hero, Antonio Varacalli, who saved a drowning woman at the cost of his own in 1917.

Photo courtesy Tony Owen. Photo painting John Fujii.

Return to the Real Bedford Falls: *The 2019 It's a Wonderful Life Festival*

At my sister Mary's invitation, I attended the *It's a Wonderful Life Festival* last year in Seneca Falls, New York, for the first time. Over a full schedule of three days of events, we helped celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the *Donna Reed Show* that ran for eight seasons (1958–1966). Each day, Mary would select and introduce a particular episode along with additional information about our Mother's career in Hollywood. Following the episode, there would be a Q&A session in which I also participated where I could.

Regular attendees from the original *It's a Wonderful Life* movie cast included Jimmy Hawkins (*Tommy Bailey*), Carol Coombs (*Janie Bailey*), Karolyn Grimes (*Zuzu Bailey*), and Jeanine Roose (*Young Violet Bick*). Another regular attendee, Brian Rohan, does an outstanding character portrayal of George Bailey (looking very much like Jimmy Stewart). To top off our 2018 visit, there was a preliminary release of the book, *The Donna Reed Show – A Pictorial Memoir*, celebrating the 60th anniversary of the show compiled by Deborah Herman, narrative by Paul Petersen, and contributions by Eddie Foy, Jimmy Hawkins, Mary Owen, and Kurt Lee. The book itself is an interesting walk down memory lane for me.

The 2019 *It's a Wonderful Life Festival* will be held December 13-15, 2019, in Seneca Falls. A full schedule of presentations, experiences, autograph sessions, screenings, banquets, breakfasts, and exhibits can be found at – **www.WonderfulLifeMuseum.com** and **www.therealbedfordfalls.com**. Mary [Owen], along with Jimmy Hawkins, Karolyn Grimes, Jeanine Roose, Monica Capra Hodges, and many other special guests are scheduled to be there. I think it will be another enjoyable time for all.

– Tony Owen



Donna Reed
1921 - 1986

- **Actress**
- **Producer**
- **Activist**
- **Mother**
- **Friend**
- **Role model**

Donna Reed touched many lives with her talent, integrity, and humanity. Born Donnabelle Mullenger near Denison, Iowa, she was an award-winning actress, pioneering executive producer, activist leader, and loving parent. Started as a film festival and scholarship fund in 1986, today's nonprofit Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts perpetuates her spirit for excellence in education and community.

Membership Renewal

Have you renewed your membership today? Consider gift memberships, too. Since 1986, your contributions have made the difference with our volunteer-driven work and goals.

Visit www.DonnaReed.org, email us at info@donnareed.org, or phone us today (712.263.3334). Thank you!

DRFPA AT A GLANCE

Important dates for the DRFPA. More detail available at DonnaReed.org.

November

[8] - Wedding - Sarah Shubert

[15-17] - Crawford County Arts

Council, *Prime Time Trio*

December

[7] - CDC Children's Free Movie - 1pm

[8] - *It's a Wonderful Life* - free screening (Spanish) - 3pm

December (continued)

[8] - *It's a Wonderful Life* - free screening (English) - 7pm

[14] - *It's a Wonderful Life* - CDC Winter Snocial Event - screening 3pm

[15] - *Michael Londra Concert*

Fundraiser DRFPA - 3pm

January

[TBD] - Donna Reed's Birthday Event

February

- - open

March

[13] - Crawford County Arts Council, "The Hall Sisters"

April

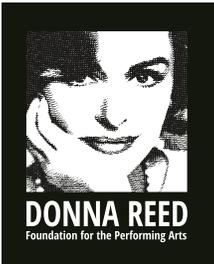
[16] - Crawford County Arts Council, "Ball in The House"

May

- - open

June

[TBD] - *Children's Musical Theater Workshop*



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A Century of Excellence: 1921 - 2021



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- Centennial 2021
- CMT 2020 Delayed
- DR Interns
- DR Show Fan Book
- The Donna Continuum
- Violet Lindsay
- 2020 Merit Awards Extended
- DRFPA at a Glance
- Roy Voggeser

WITH APPRECIATION

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- Crawford County Community Foundation
 - Creative Center of America
 - Robin Blakely
 - Robin Bohlin
 - Denison Rotary Club
 - Jerry Peterman
 - Pam Soseman
 - Roy and Ann Voggeser
- Welcome new volunteer:
- Mary Morgan

Donna Reed Centennial 1921 - 2021

Donna Reed's centennial year is 2021. The Donna Reed Foundation has partnered with Robin Blakely (*Creative Center of America*) to develop a year-long celebration and brand development effort that will connect important audiences across time and space. The current plan includes a strong Internet and social media presence, targeted experiences for generations of fans, and growing resources for performing arts students, media interns, and tourists of western Iowa. A new Internet welcome portal for DonnaReed.org has already launched as a community center for friends and partner organizations of the Donna Reed Foundation.

While Donna Reed's story is new to a generation of creatives, her ideals are timeless and invite a connected future of our own making. Her centennial will expand the reach of her work, actions, and character as valuable seeds of inspiration around the world. "One thing that we hope to explore are the vast connections to and from Donna Reed's life," said John Fujii, longtime volunteer and member of the board. "You might know this as the 'Kevin Bacon Game' of linkages but it's also right there at the heart of *It's a Wonderful Life* – George Bailey's life lesson about the important role that he plays in so many other lives besides his own."

"Now I think it is Mary Bailey's turn as one of the real heroes of that story. There are so many interesting threads throughout Donna's life – start anywhere, *even from today!* Pick a favorite film or follow one of her many letters or consider even a professional gesture of kindness as pioneer in her own production company – *she touched so many and she still speaks to us all.*"

Goals for the year ahead include fuller appreciation of Donna's life and legacy, meaningful interaction by her many inspired communities, and a sustainable endowment to support our future work for the next generation of dreamers.

-- Donna Reed Foundation





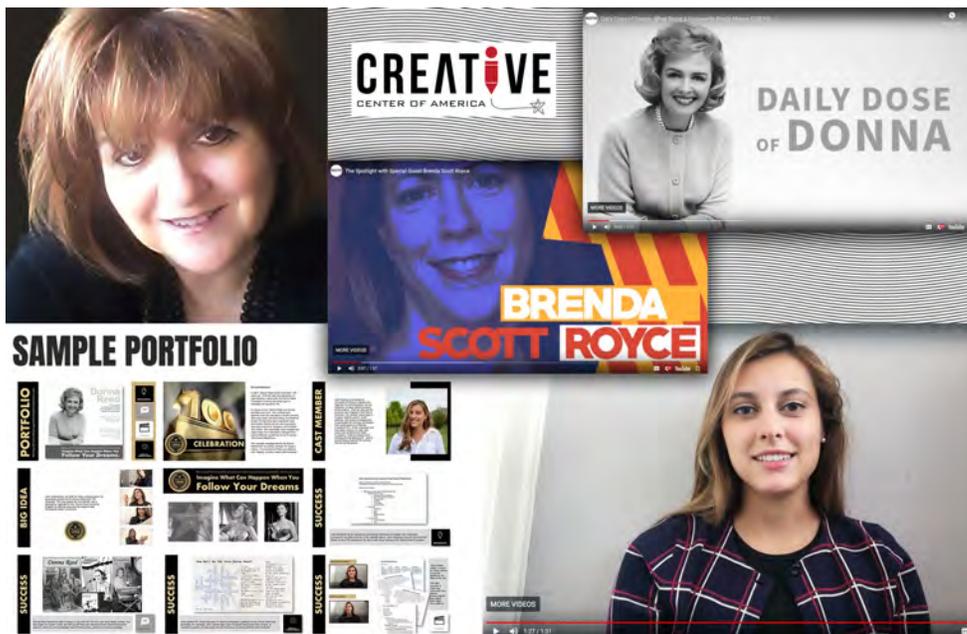
Casts of many! Amazing talent and volunteers! A few of the many productions enjoyed from a week of hard work at the Children's Musical Theatre Workshops. Cannot wait for next time! -- Photos courtesy Ann Voggesser

Children's Musical Theatre Workshop Delayed for COVID-19

As schools in Iowa and across the nation closed their doors because of the COVID-19 pandemic, The Donna Reed Foundation made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 Children's Musical Theatre workshop. "During this time of uncertainty, the health and safety of our students, their families, our volunteer staff, and audience members was our top concern," said Pat Fleshner of the Donna Reed Foundation. "We were disappointed we could not bring this popular theatre experience to the community but we are looking forward to offering an exciting adventure next year."

This year's workshop production, *Disney's The Aristocats KIDS*, will be held over for next year's workshop program. This is the first summer that The Donna Reed Foundation hasn't staged a Children's Musical Theatre workshop since it was established in 2007.

-- Donna Reed Foundation



-- Images courtesy Robin Blakely, Creative Center of America

Interns Help Realize a Centennial Dream

The 2021 Donna Reed Centennial celebration could not happen without an amazing cast of national student intern talent led by Robin Blakely of the Creative Center of America. Initially supported by a media internship program from the University of Missouri–Kansas City, students from around the country are researching, developing, and reviewing campaign assets that will be shared daily via numerous social and Internet outlets in 2021.

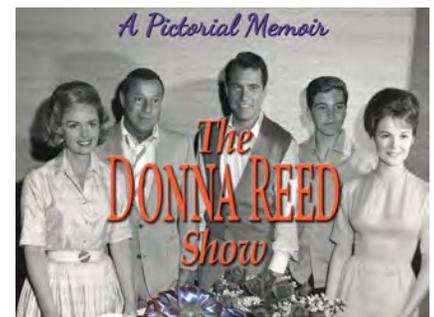
The celebration will bring to life Donna Reed's extensive life, inspiration, and legacy for generations of fans and communities a part of her story for the last century. Since 1986, the Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts has kept her dream alive through an evolution of festivals, scholarships, museums, and events that brought people together. Now, more than ever, the Foundation wants a worldwide connection for her timeless story and values as we enter Donna's next century.

"Our students really resonate with the values of Donna Reed's story – *that it is possible to follow your dreams with integrity, courtesy, equity, and humanity*," Robin shared in a recent development call. "It makes them really excited to learn about her and inspires an excellence in them as they help to retell some of her story through their eyes and experiences."

The Donna Reed Foundation is excited to partner with industry-veteran Robin Blakely as well. Robin is an award-winning communications and business development professional specializing in strategy, branding, and coaching for writers, creatives, and national organizations. As a coach and educator, she shares the Foundation's values for excellence in education and community as we work together to honor and grow Donna Reed's legacy in the years ahead.

Thank you for everyone's continued hard work and looking forward to a fun and amazing success.

-- John Fujii, President, DRFPA



Picture Perfect

Fans of *The Donna Reed Show* will be happy to know about a new book, now available, *The Donna Reed Show: A Pictorial Memoir*. This 206 page book is full of rarely seen photos taken on the set and behind the scenes of *The Donna Reed Show*, selected from Donna's personal collection.

Accompanying these photos are stories from Paul Petersen, sharing his memories about working on the show, his TV family, and the guest stars that appeared. More memories are shared by series regular Jimmy Hawkins as well as a note from Donna's daughter Mary Owen and the show's casting director, Eddie Foy III.

The book includes discographies for Shelley and Paul and a full guest star section. The book is available on Amazon as well as the publisher's website, Micro Publishing Media, at micropublishingmedia.com. If you are a fan of the show, you will not be disappointed!

-- Kurt Lee

The Donna Continuum

A century after her birth, Donna Reed's life impact for integrity, courtesy, equity, and humanity still endures in hearts and imaginations around the world. Donna's story is laced with strong connections – from sensitive and intelligent screen characters to real mentorship behind the camera to even stronger words and actions for clear causes. Donna is not just a star but the center of a whole galaxy of connected light.

Praised by her industry yet disappointed with the lack of meaningful roles for women in motion pictures, Donna and her husband, Tony Owen, launched TODON Productions and a television situation comedy, *The Donna Reed Show*, that could progressively explore themes such as women's rights, teenage adolescence, single parenting, gender equality, interracial marriage, and addiction – all within an American family context. As a pioneering female executive producer and director of her own vehicle, she worked hard to manage a creative and fair work environment by standards still emerging today.

Donna cared about connections and was concerned for our common future. She never forgot her roots and she never stopped trying to improve the path for herself and others. She was loyal to family and friends and generous with her kindness through letters to fans and combatants throughout her life. Stories relating to Donna told from all walks of life and all generations seem to commonly end for most tellers with personal hope and appreciation.

Fast forward to today with a Foundation to her name and generations of people still connecting because of her legacy and inspired by her care.

New media and new possibilities for connections will further chart what is possible by the Donna Reed in all of us – *let's find out where this story takes us next*. If we can act with courtesy and build trust with equity and humanity, then an important Iowa dream will continue to make a special difference for tomorrow.

-- John Fujii



Donna Reed

An Essential Centennial Primer



Actress



Producer



Activist



Mother



Friend



27 January 1921
Denison, Iowa

- 14 January 1986
Beverly Hills, California



<p>William and Hazel Mullenger Donnabelle was first of five children</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Great Depression</p>	<p>40 Motion Pictures 1941 - 1960</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">World War II</p>	<p>Best Supporting Actress - 1953</p> 	<p>Pioneer Female Executive Producer and company owner (c. 1956)</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Vietnam War</p>
1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s
<p>Iowa</p>  <p>Mullenger Farmhouse near Denison</p>	<p>Penpals</p> <p>Lifelong passion for letter writing to family, friends, fans, military, social causes, etc. - was loyal penpal with Violet Coughenour Lindsay from 1934 - 1982</p>	<p>College Hollywood War letters</p> 	<p>TODON Productions Television</p>  <p>Donna Reed Show 1958-1966 (8 seasons) 125 episodes</p>
1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
<p>Activism</p>  <p>Another Mother for Peace</p>	<p>Donna Reed Foundation</p>  <p>Nonprofit incorporates 1987</p>	<p>Festivals Scholarships DR Theatre ...</p>	<p>Children's Musical Theatre Workshops Museum ...</p>
1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
<p>Another Mother for Peace Co-Founder - 1967</p>	<p>Nick-at-Nite Donna-Thon</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Era: Broadcast Networks</p>	<p>Donna Reed Show DVDs</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Era: Cable Television</p>	<p>Donna Reed Show DVDs</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Era: Computer Internet</p>
2010s	2020s	2030s	2040s
<p>DonnaReed.org Facebook YouTube MeTV ...</p>	<p>...</p>	<p>...</p>	<p>...</p>



Violet Coughenour Lindsay Donna's Life-long Pen Pal

Violet "Vi" Coughenour Lindsay, Donna Reed's pen pal of 48 years, passed way on August 11th at her home in Matthews, North Carolina. Born in 1921 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Violet began writing to Donnabelle Mullenger in 1934 after a church bulletin listed her as a potential pen pal from Iowa. Both teenagers shared a love of reading and exchanged details about their schooling, family, and friends. Even after Donna's career began to flourish, her personal letters never changed in tone or interests. Violet followed her friend's career and enjoyed all of Donna's film and television work – Violet's favorite film was *It's a Wonderful Life*. In 2004, Violet visited Denison to donate her 82-letter collection at the dedication of the Donna Reed Museum and Archive. Tom McMahon's December 21, 2003, interview of Lindsay (*The Daily Nonpareil*) mentions that the two pen pals tried to meet in New York once but never managed to connect. The last letter in the collection is from February 1982 as a thank you for a birthday gift that Violet had sent Donna. It warmly values connections, celebrations, and the promise of a future ahead. The power of the pen lives on in their memory and ours.

– Donna Reed Foundation



Violet at the museum dedication.



A few of the Foundation's many talented awardees (*Left-Right, Top-Bottom*):

Leisa Fox (1987), Kari Wahlgren (1995), Saycon Sengbloh (1996), Jackie Schmillen (1998)
Mekia Cox (1999), Alex Packard (2017), Julie Matta (2019), Matt Moran (2019)

2020 Iowa Merit Awards for Dramatic Performance: Extended

Due to the extraordinary circumstances of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Donna Reed Foundation reopened and extended its Merit Awards competition for the past school year (2020) after initially closing it. The Foundation wanted to ensure that deserving students do not miss a chance for recognition of their talents. Past awardees have gone on to significant careers and contributions. Some continue to share their talents and give back to support the dreams that we recognize today.

Qualified Iowa students should review and prepare their submissions as soon as possible. The submission deadline for all application materials is November 30, 2020. Details are available from the DonnaReed.org website under the "Support Creative Talent" tab.

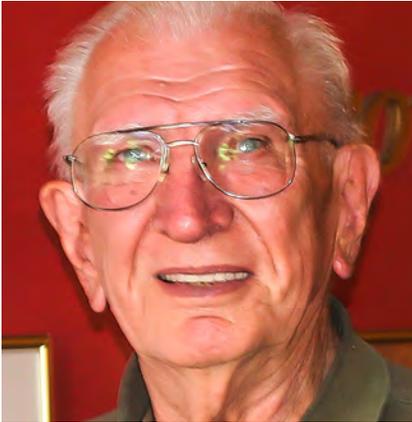
– Tony Owen



Donna Reed
1921 - 1986

- Actress
- Producer
- Activist
- Mother
- Friend
- Role model

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Roy Voggeser: Docent Extraordinaire

Longtime volunteer and board of director member for the Foundation, Roy Voggeser, has stepped down to focus on his health. Contributor at so many levels, one of Roy's passions has been to give tours of the Donna Reed Theatre that he has also worked hard to remodel and maintain. To this end, a favorite stop on his tour is now named the *Roy Voggeser Projection Booth* at the very top of our historic theatre. Thank you for all that you do, Roy.

Membership Renewal

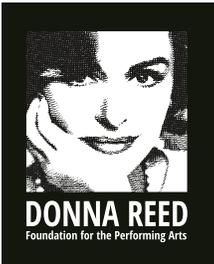
Have you renewed your membership today? Consider gift memberships, too. Since 1986, your contributions have made the difference with our volunteer-driven work and goals.

Visit www.DonnaReed.org, email us at info@donnareed.org, or phone us today (712.263.3334). Thank you!

DRFPA AT A GLANCE

Important dates for the DRFPA. More detail available at DonnaReed.org.

Due to COVID 19, the Foundation is only taking appointments for tours or gift shopping. Please call 712-269-0221 and leave a message. A volunteer will return your call as soon as possible to schedule your visit. Thank you.



The Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts

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- Cloris Leachman
- 2021 CMT Returns
- Museum Virtual Tour
- President's Message

WITH APPRECIATION

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- Creative Center of America
- Robin Blakely
- Trisha Boettger
- Robin Bohlin
- Kurt Lee
- Robert Lyons
- Nathan Mahrt
- Laurel Olsen
- Jerry Peterman
- Tylor Schulte
- Garrett Stroginis
- Ann Voggeser

Iowa Women's Hall of Fame Inducts Donna Reed in 2021

Started in 1975, the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame honors Iowans for their enduring impacts on society as elevating female role models for all ages and walks of life. In 2021, Donna Reed joined an honor roll of 188 women whose lives shaped and inspired a rich cultural heritage for Iowa and the nation at large.

The four inductees for 2021 were:

- **Dr. Roxann Marie Ryan, Ph.D.** (*Cresco, Iowa*) – Assistant Iowa Attorney General, Educator and Scholar
- **Cornelia Clarke** (*Grinnell, Iowa*) – Nature Photographer, Academic Contributor, Book Illustrator
- **Donna Reed** (*Denison, Iowa*) – Award-winning Actress, Pioneering Television Executive, Peace Advocate
- **Jan Mitchell** (*Des Moines, Iowa*) – Educator, Champion for Women's Rights and Iowa Latina Education, 1997 Iowa Teacher of the Year

Past honorees include civil rights leaders, lawmakers, educators, artists, writers, musicians, scientists, journalists, doctors, nurses, volunteers, and an astronaut. Donna Reed's centennial story included her strong family ties to Iowa, her modern outlook on equity and humanity for women, and her continuing spirit and ideals supported by Denison and the Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts.

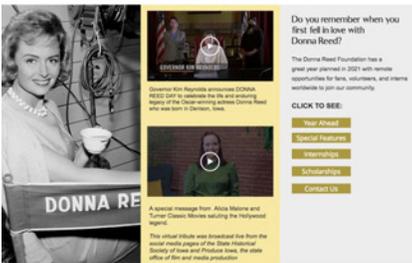
Congratulations to all Iowa Women's Hall of Fame honorees!

-- Donna Reed Foundation



2021 Inductees: Dr. Roxann Marie Ryan, Cornelia Clarke, Donna Reed, Jan Mitchell. Clarke photo courtesy Grinnell Historical Museum via Wikipedia.org (CC 2.5). Mitchell photo from humanrights.iowa.gov.

DONNA REED - 2021 CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION



2021: It's A Wonderful Year



www.DonnaReed.org/celebrate

Donna Reed's 100th Birthday

Donna Reed's 100th Birthday was January 27, 2021. Thanks to the efforts of many people along with Donna's daughter, Mary Owen, Donna's birthday was full of celebration.

Starting the Day Off

Jackie Schmillen, with WOI-TV in West Des Moines, is a former Donna Reed Foundation scholarship winner. Jackie paid tribute to Donna on the early morning television show "Good Morning Iowa". Her story underlines the fact that Donna Reed is a part of our American Heritage and the Donna Reed Center and Heritage Museum helps keep Donna's legacy alive by working to preserve archives and by sharing special stories and memories.

Proclaiming Donna Reed Day

From the governor's office in the Iowa state capitol building, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds officially declared January 27, 2021 "Donna Reed Day" in Iowa. Reynolds noted that Donna Reed is an early trailblazer, showing women they can achieve their goals. The signed proclamation is now on display at the Donna Reed Heritage Museum.

100th Birthday Video Tribute

Robin Blakely (*Creative Center of America*) brought her crew to Donna's hometown of Denison, Iowa to film a 100th Birthday tribute in the Donna Reed Theatre. The tribute gives an overview of Donna's life and how her memory continues on through her television work and the movie classic, *It's a Wonderful Life*. It is a centerpiece of the centennial celebration page at www.DonnaReed.org.

TCM Tribute to Donna Reed

Alicia Malone of Turner Classic Movies delivered a special message in tribute to Donna Reed. TCM also featured a short bio tribute to Donna, which included clips from her movies, including home movies.

Front Page News

Iowan's woke up the following morning to Donna Reed on the front page of the newspaper. Both The Des Moines Register and the Iowa City
(continued on page 3 - *Donna Reed's 100th Birthday*)



EXTRA! EXTRA! • NEWS FROM THE RED CARPET



IOWA HISTORY 101 with Donna Reed

The State Historical Society of Iowa produces an online learning series that focuses on the past lives of Iowans to help commemorate the 175th anniversary of Iowa. On March 25th, the series featured “100 Years of Donna Reed” with host, Leo Landis (*upper right*), museum curator at the State Historical Museum of Iowa and guests Mary Owen (*upper left*) and Kurt Lee (*upper center*) from The Donna Reed Foundation Board.

Mary shared about her mother’s early days growing up in Denison, Iowa along with some early photos never before shown to the public, which were taken from an old family photo album. Questions also covered *The Donna Reed Show*, Donna’s role as a mother on the TV series, and how growing up in Iowa may have helped contribute to her character on the show.

Some of the many photos shared during the webinar are above. If you would like to see a recap of the entire session, go to the Donna Reed Foundation website at DonnaReed.org/celebrate and scroll down to the links featured with “History 101”. If you would like to attend a future Iowa History 101 webinar or watch any of the past sessions, visit the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs website at Iowaculture.gov/history. The webinars are 60 minutes in length and are held on the second and fourth Thursday of each month.

-- Kurt Lee

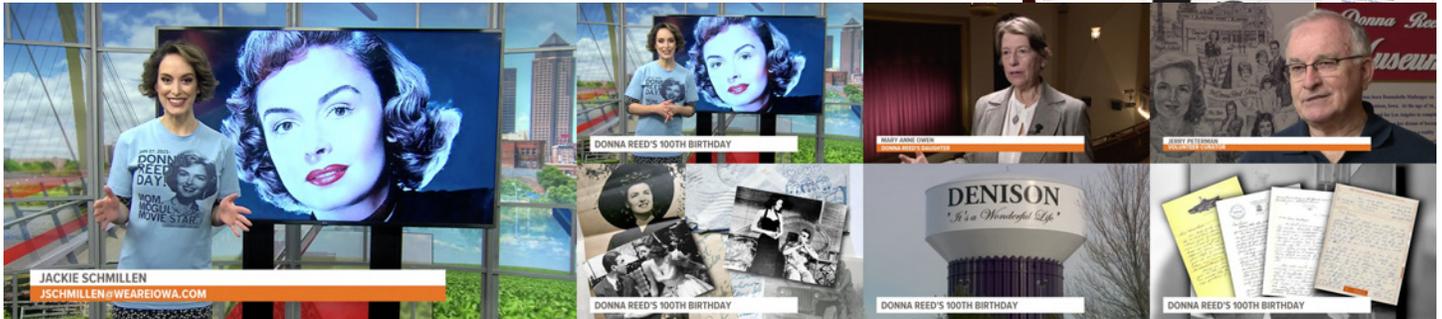
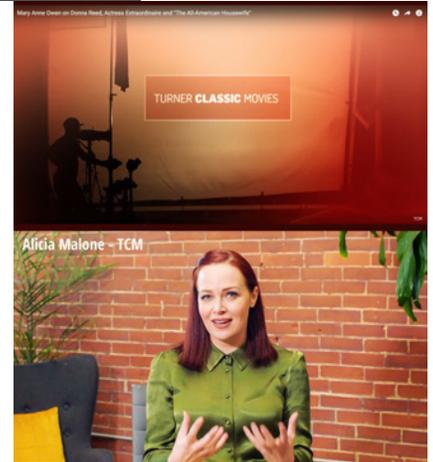
(continued from page 2 - Donna Reed's 100th Birthday)

Press-Citizen had their front page filled with a Donna Reed photo collage including a story about Donna’s life, how she started in show business, how she never lost her values, and how she visited her family and hometown as often as possible.

You Haven't Missed Out

Did you miss these events? Good news – you haven’t. You can view all the above videos on our website. Go to DonnaReed.org/celebrate where you’ll find a full page with all the celebration events.

-- Kurt Lee





Donna Reed Featured in Des Moines

The Donna Reed Foundation archives are full of items covering Donna's career. Items such as promotional photos from movies she appeared in, scripts from *The Donna Reed Show*, or large scrapbooks full of newspaper clippings. Some of the greatest things preserved in the archives are dresses and other garments worn by Donna, either from her personal wardrobe or from *The Donna Reed Show*.

As part of the Donna Reed 100th birthday celebration, the State Historical Society of Iowa has created a museum exhibit featuring six of Donna's dresses. The display is at the State Historical Museum of Iowa located just west of the Iowa State capitol in Des Moines.

Visitors can enjoy this unique experience of an Iowa icon through December 31, 2021. Special thanks to Leo Landis, State Curator along with Andrew Harrington, Exhibits Manager at the State Historical Society of Iowa for making this happen.

Here is some historical background of some of the pieces featured in the display:

- **Pink Dress** – Donna wore this dress during various episodes of *The Donna Reed Show*, from Season 5 through Season 8 (1962-1966). She also wore this dress in family publicity shots published in magazines and newspapers.
- **Blue & White Plaid Dress** – Donna wears this during Season 7 of *The Donna Reed Show* (1964-1965) and wears it in a Singer sewing commercial. Singer was a sponsor of the show during that season.
- **Strapless Evening Gown** – This gown, made with feathers on the upper portion, was worn by Donna to the 36th Annual Academy Awards in April 1964. She presented awards that year for Best Costume Design.
- **Blue & White Jumpsuit** – This is the oldest piece in the display. In the fall of 1941 Donna appeared in her second movie, *Shadow of the Thin Man*, starring William Powell, Myrna Loy, and Asta the Dog (the popular pet detective who appeared in many of the movies of that series). Over 25 promotional shots were taken of Donna with Asta the Dog, wearing this jumpsuit.

-- Kurt Lee



Cloris & Donna

Actresses Donna Reed and Cloris Leachman have more in common than most people know.

- Donna and Cloris are both Academy Award winners for Best Supporting Actress. Donna won for her performance in the 1953 motion picture, *From Here To Eternity*. Cloris won for her performance in the 1971 movie, *The Last Picture Show*.
- Donna and Cloris are both from Iowa - Donna from Denison and Cloris from Des Moines.
- The two actresses appeared together in an episode of *The Donna Reed Show*, titled *The Mouse at Play*, which aired October 5, 1961 (Season 4).
- Both actresses are honored, side by side, in the "Hollywood in the Heartland" exhibit at the State Historical Museum of Iowa in Des Moines.

Sadly, Cloris Leachman passed away on January 27, 2021, which was also Donna Reed's 100th birthday.

-- Kurt Lee



AristoCats, KIDS prowled its way into the hearts of many at the Denison Fine Arts Center on June, 26, 2021. -- Photos courtesy Ann Voggesser

By The Numbers

- 31 students from 18 families
- Communities represented - Denison, Schlesig, Vail, Carroll, Harlan, Coralville, and Elkhorn (NE)
- 12 Achievement Awards
- 125 performance attendance
- Financial support - Hy-Vee

2021 Children's Musical Theatre Workshop Returns

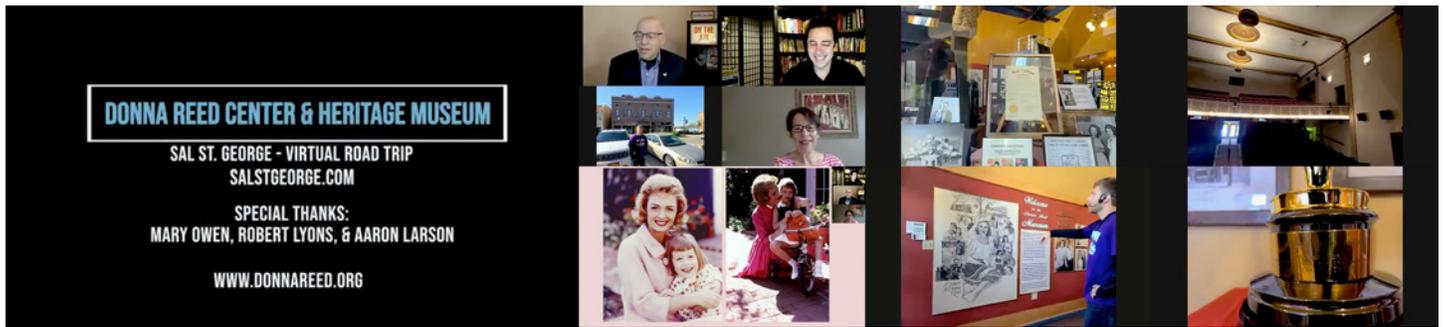
Special thanks to all of the volunteers, participants, parents, attendees, and donors for a wonderful theatre workshop in June. *AristoCats, KIDS* was coached and directed by Laurel Olsen. Tylor Schulte was the vocal director and handled sound.

Trisha Boettger led the production team that included Abbey Mescek, Daithi Brady, Alix Harms, Maggie Chapman, and Violet Christensen. Production assistance included Shelby Kastner, Taya Adams, and Liz Christiansen.

The Merit Award judge was Beth Vogt. Office support included Robin Bohlin, Pat Fleshner, Ann Voggesser, Brennan Waterman, Robert Lyons, and Jerry Peterman.

Robin Bohlin and Jerry Peterman coordinated the workshop. This valuable workshop experience would not be possible without this dedicated team of volunteers and broader community support – *Thank you!*

-- Donna Reed Foundation



Donna Reed Museum Virtual Tour

Sal St. George Productions features living history museum tours over the Internet. Some of the places they have toured in the past are the *Clark Gable Museum* (Cadiz, Ohio), the *Laurel & Hardy Museum* (Harlem, Georgia), and the *Molly Brown House Museum* (Denver, Colorado). After they featured a virtual tour of the *It's a Wonderful Life Museum* in Seneca Falls, New York, the company did a virtual tour of the *Donna Reed Heritage Museum and Donna Reed Theatre*, here in Denison, Iowa. The show hosts spoke with Mary Owen and Robert Lyons, our newest Foundation board member, who was also the live tour guide during an interactive visit and interview session, giving bits of history of our beautiful 107-year-old theater as well as the Heritage Museum. Thank you to Aaron Larson who helped with camera work in Denison during this session. If you missed the tour, you can watch it on our website at DonnaReed.org/celebrate and scroll down to links featured in "Virtual Road Trip". The video is 64 minutes in length.

-- Kurt Lee



A Modern Woman in Any Era

2021 is a milestone year for Donna Reed. It is her 100th birthday anniversary that began on a farm near Denison, Iowa. It is a banner year for her to join so many other inspiring honorees in the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame. It recognizes a life that includes top industry recognition for her role in the 1953 classic, *From Here to Eternity*, and a 75th anniversary for her seasonal favorite, *It's a Wonderful Life*, that is also on the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress. 2021 recognizes Donna Reed for her pioneering female professionalism (*TODON Productions* with her husband, Tony Owen) and her outspoken peace efforts (*Another Mother for Peace*) which helped rally voices and action everywhere.

Yes, 2021 is a milestone year for Donna Reed. Yet perhaps one of her best achievements to date is *you*. No matter how you found her (movies, television, peace work, WWII letters, etc.), we think that you will agree that we were all touched by her life in meaningful ways. Donna was a modern person for every era because her life story proves that we can take action to make our own life stories count. She inspires us to do so by living the best we can, working together, sharing, and caring for others through acts of kindness and equity. When viewed this way, she makes us timeless. Let's continue to make the difference that she would encourage us to try for each other – *together*.

John Fujii - President, DRFPA



Donna Reed
1921 - 1986

- Actress
- Producer
- Activist
- Mother
- Friend
- Role model

Donna Reed touched many lives with her talent, integrity, and humanity. Born Donnabelle Mullenger near Denison, Iowa, she was an award-winning actress, pioneering executive producer, activist leader, and loving parent. Started as a film festival and scholarship fund in 1986, today's nonprofit Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts perpetuates her spirit for excellence in education and community.

Membership Renewal

Have you renewed your membership today? Consider gift memberships, too. Since 1986, your contributions have made the difference with our volunteer-driven work and goals.

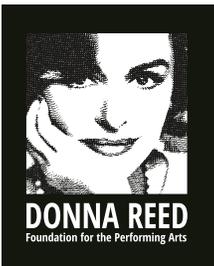
Visit www.DonnaReed.org, email us at info@donnareed.org, or phone us today (712.263.3334). Thank you!



DRFPA AT A GLANCE

Important dates for the DRFPA. More detail available at DonnaReed.org.

Due to COVID 19, the Foundation is only taking appointments for tours or gift shopping. Please call 712-269-0221 and leave a message. A volunteer will return your call as soon as possible to schedule your visit. Thank you.



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Stamp