



Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts (DRFPA) 2026 Iowa Merit Awards for Dramatic Performance

Since 1987, The Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts has recognized merit and the pursuit of excellence with awards in honor of Iowa actress, Donna Reed. Backed by the generosity of her home community, membership, and past awardees nationwide, award recipients have followed Donna's footsteps in demonstrating their own talent, perseverance, and passion for the performing arts.

Purpose:

DRFPA 2026 Iowa Merit Awards for Dramatic Performance help recognize excellence and promising young talent from Iowa interested in pursuing further enrichment and education in the performing arts. **The 2026 program focuses on student dramatic performance.** Measures of merit are performance dedication, demonstrable skill, scholastic recommendations, and future goals in the performing arts.

Qualifications:

Open to all **Iowa** high school students (grades 10-12) in good standing at an accredited Iowa high school and with grade point averages of 3.0 or greater who are studying drama and have acted in official school productions for 2025 and/or 2026. Students must be enrolled – or recently graduated – for the 2026 academic year to qualify. **Unfortunately, students and applications from outside of Iowa will not be considered or returned.**

Jury Notes:

Performance submissions should demonstrate a range of acting abilities – from drama to comedy, either combined in a single 3-5 minute performance or two to three different scenes not totaling more than the five minute sample criteria. Dramatic performances could be a scene from works like "To Kill a Mocking Bird" or short dramatic audition monologues. Comedy segments or monologues are at the application's discretion, demonstrating intellectual humor. Lewd or questionable material is discouraged in the sample.

Ideas for monologues can be found from many sources including the Internet. The search engine Google returns ideas for possible leads with search criteria such as "one minute monologues," "30 second monologues," "audition monologues," "monologues for auditions female," "short female monologues," etc. Original work is also welcome when it helps demonstrate performance range and impact.

Requirements:

Each application requires the following submission elements by the final deadline. Any supporting material received after the deadline will disqualify the application as incomplete.

Note - All submission form material (items #1, #4 below) will need to be scanned for digital upload submission as a PDF file format. Only digital submissions will be considered for our distributed jury process.

1. Fully completed application (all sections) with final signatures
2. Audition sample (3-5 minutes maximum) with clear audio, video, and lighting quality (see **Video Submission** in application for details)
3. Head shot portrait of student (see additional details in application)
4. One signed letter of recommendation from drama educator

Deadlines:

Submission Website Open – *submission instructions*

- **Submission Deadline. MAY 29, 2026 / 3 pm** (CDT) DIGITAL-ONLY.
<https://www.donnareed.org/performing-arts-scholarships/apply-2026>
- **Merit Award Notification. Awardees Will be Notified in late September, 2026.**

Awards:

Variable amounts, up to \$1,000, may be awarded by the DRFPA at its discretion and final judgment. Assessment of merit will include application contents, personal statement, qualities, and skill demonstrated in video audition sample, personal recommendation, and future potential.

Conditions of Awards:

1. Incomplete applications or materials received on or after the deadline will be disqualified from consideration.
2. Submission materials become the property of DRFPA and cannot be returned under any conditions. Please keep a copy of all submission materials.
3. Awards are paid directly to the student. All tax implications are the responsibilities of the recipients.
4. Decisions to recognize merit are at the sole discretion of the DRFPA. Jury committee decisions shall be final.
5. Award recipients agree to DRFPA future media publicity in forms of name and likeness without further compensation or notification.

DRFPA 2026 Iowa Merit Awards for Dramatic Performance Application Form

Instructions:

Please read all instructions in these forms before starting.

Please fill out all fields of this form and return the following checklist items with your application. For best application results, please fill out form with word processor, typewriter, or print clearly. (Illegible or unsigned forms can result in disqualification.)

- Printed and signed application form including personal statement
 - PDF-format scan of final, signed document required for submission
 - Scanner or smart-phone apps such as Adobe Scan or JotNot generate acceptable PDF files
- Audition performance samples (see Video Submission section of this form)
 - Audition performance samples [**required**]
 - IAWL interview [**optional**]
- Head shot portrait of student applicant (for identification and publicity) – must be appropriate for publication purposes
- One signed letter of recommendation from your drama educator
- Please label every element of your submission with your first and last name for identification (if pieces become separated this will help us).*

Submission Deadline:

Submission materials must be uploaded to the DonnaReed.org submission webpage no later than **Friday, May 29, 2026** at **3:00 pm (CDT)**.

The submission upload page will be available mid-May 2026 at:

<https://www.donnareed.org/performing-arts-scholarships/apply-2026>

Please contact us immediately if you experience any difficulties with this application file.

The contact address is spelled out here to reduce SPAM – please make appropriate changes when addressing us:

merit-info "at" donnareed.org

Applicant Information (All sections A-P – okay to add space/formatting/pages to fit your inputs in each section below as necessary):

A. First Name: ___

B. Last Name: ___

C. Address: ___

D. City: ___

E. State: *Iowa*

F. Zip Code: ___

G. E-mail: ___

H. Phone (home): ___

I. Phone (cell): ___

J. High School (Attending/Attended): ___

K. Current Grade: 10th 11th 12th

L. Expected Graduation Year: ___ or ___ Graduated in 2026

M. Grade-Point-Average (GPA) as of this date: ___

N. Performance Experience / Production Credits by Title, Date, Organization, Role (copy and add as many sections as necessary):

1. Production Title: ___

Date: ___

Organization Name (School/Other): ___

Role: ___

2. Production Title: ___

Date: ___

Organization Name (School/Other): ___

Role: ___

O. All Awards/Honors Received (School/Other): ___

P. Additional Experience and Comments (non-theater activities, accomplishments, or anything else we should know about you): ___

Applicant Personal Statement (max: 600 words)

Please tell us about yourself. Some things that might be helpful to us include your current and future interests in pursuing dramatic arts study, how you have seen improvements in your own recent work, any aspirational goals you might have, and what a merit award might mean to you. (Do not, however, feel limited to these ideas alone.)

Video Submission:

The DRFPA requires a 3-5 minute (maximum) video sample of a personal audition piece to help evaluate performance skill. The format is single person (or two person scene) shot against a plain background. Video camera or mobile device must be on a tripod or fixed mount. The performance space should be well lit with clear audio and sharp focus on the performer for proper judging. All video must be in landscape/horizontal format (no portrait/vertical video from mobile phones).

Note - No group performances or audience/back-of-the-auditorium/back of house videos will be accepted for consideration.

Please note the Jury Notes section from page 1 for requested content and form.

Your submission must include a short introduction (no more than 30 seconds) identifying:

1. Your name
2. Your city/town of residence
3. Your high school (current or recently graduated)
4. A brief greeting to the Foundation [optional]

This can be stated verbally or written as a slate on paper to help identify your video from other submissions. The length of this introduction section does not count against your content length of 3-5 minutes review time.

Digital video files of the following formats are acceptable for digital submission only (must be readable by Windows Media Player, Apple QuickTime Player, or VLC player [videolan.org] for review).

Note that your original submission material **cannot be returned** under any condition.

Acceptable video file formats include:

- MPEG4 video
- Apple MOV format files
- Windows Media Video (WMV) format files

Samples must be focused, well lighted, and with enough audio clarity to evaluate performance. (Poor recordings may impact your performance evaluation.)

2026 Online Alternative - If videos are uploaded to a hosting site, then a valid link must be provided and content cannot be altered after the submission deadline. Additionally, the applicant understands there may be privacy, copyright assignment, server outages, etc. that may additionally impact their submission outside the control of the DRFPA if a hosting site provides access to their video for our review. Videos that have invalid date stamps or suggest work completed after the deadline **may be rejected** from consideration and **may disqualify the application**.

Supplemental for 2026 – In addition to the required 3-5 minute dramatic or audition performance samples, applicants can also include a three-minute interview with their parents or relatives on what the movie ***It's a Wonderful Life*** means to them and how it might have positively affected their lives. (This additional submission component is optional but should be led by and include the applicant in the video.)

Head Shot:

A digital version of your portrait / headshot can be included on the same media as your video submission. Your file should be **no smaller** than 1800 x 1200 pixels (this is 4x6 inches at 300 dots-per-inch or dpi). Images should be a well-lit and produced for publicity purposes.

Avoid distracting backgrounds or group images. The DRFPA may crop, edit, or otherwise revise images for best production and editorial purposes.

Signature Authorization:

In submitting this application and all related materials, I certify that the information is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that The Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts (DRFPA) may request verification and that falsification of information will result in termination of any award granted. If selected to receive an award, I agree to the use of my name, likeness, and information from my application materials for promotional purposes by the DRFPA without further compensation or notification. My signature below also certifies that I understand and accept the terms of the disclaimer found directly below.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

All applicants **under 18 years of age** (at date of signing above) also require a parent or guardian approval by signature:

Adult Name (please print): _____

Adult Signature: _____

Future Contact Permission:

Yes, I wish the DRFPA (and only the DRFPA) to contact me about future educational opportunities or DRFPA events and news relevant to the foundation.

Please initial here: _____

Disclaimer:

The Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts (DRFPA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Denison, Iowa. The DRFPA shall not be liable for any consequential damages (including attorney fees) incurred due to errors in this application document, processes described within, or failures by the DRFPA or other participating organizations to fulfill the application process by the required deadlines as stated due to, but not limited to, acts of God, delivery failures, theft, fire, return-to-sender actions, lateness in applying, Internet (local and global) failures, etc. The DRFPA reserves the right to suspend or cancel the program due to insufficient application response without notice. All submission materials become the property of the DRFPA and cannot be returned under any conditions. Participation or recognition by this program does not imply any endorsements by the DRFPA for any external causes or interests without prior written agreement.

Required Check List for Merit Award Application – 2026

- Application for Merit Award completed and signed per instructions
 - Clean, legible scan of final signed forms for upload as PDF file
 - *Scanner or smart-phone apps such as Adobe Scan or JotNot generate acceptable PDF files*
- Letters of Recommendation completed and included per instructions
 - Clean, legible scan of final letter for upload as PDF file
- Head Shot (high resolution image **no smaller than** 1800 x 1200 in dimensions) with your Name (in filename for positive identification) for publicity purposes
- Video submission of your performance per Instruction under – "Video Submission"
 - Review acceptable video formats in application (MPEG4, MOV, WMV)
 - Remember to include – Slate / Intro Information – in your video
 - Landscape / horizontal video only (no vertical videos)
 - Plain background – well lit – good audio – sharp focus – fixed camera
 - No "back of the house" / auditorium videos will be accepted
- Final submission deadline for Merit Award Application and video is:
 - **Friday, May 29, 2026** – 3:00pm (Central Daylight Time)

<https://www.donnareed.org/performing-arts-scholarships/apply-2026>