

**NOMINATION FOR CHERYL (EDIS) ERICKSON FOR
NORTH PLATTE HIGH SCHOOL
DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI**

**OUTSTANDING ACCOMPLISHMENTS
IN THE CATEGORY OF
SERVICE TO NORTH PLATTE COMMUNITY**

Cheryl (Edis) Erickson was born and raised in North Platte. She graduated from North Platte High School in 1962 and attended Kearney State College, graduating with a degree in Elementary Education in 1966. Cheri came directly back to her beloved home town and began teaching 5th Grade in McDonald Elementary School, where she taught for two years. She married and – because she moved to a home outside the City limits – she was unable to continue teaching in the North Platte School District. She then taught middle school in Maxwell two years, and with the birth of her second son in 1970, became a full-time mother.

In 1972, Cheri opened a home-décor shop called The Decorator in the brand-new Westfield Shopping Center in North Platte. This business was a vital, contributing member of the North Platte community and economy for the next 23 years, until she closed it in 1995. During that time, while she worked full-time as a successful Interior Designer, Cheri also continued to volunteer her talents and efforts to support the community.

Working around her schedule at The Decorator, Cheri was an indefatigable volunteer for her children's classes during the 1970's and 1980's when her children attended school in the North Platte School District. She read to the early elementary students, made and brought cupcakes and cookies, accompanied the children on field trips, participated in PTA efforts, provided tutoring assistance, and was instrumental in helping to create and assist an omnibus program for gifted and talented students. She also worked in the McKinley Elementary School Library as a volunteer for several years.

In addition, she continued her support in the community. In 1980, a North Platte Town Hall Lecture Series was founded, bringing a *"diverse array of luminaries from around the nation and the world, including journalists, authors, actors, political figures, scientists, elite athletes, and more"* to the citizens of North Platte. These quarterly lectures are held in the Neville Center for the Performing Arts, and lecture attendees are invited to have lunch with the speaker afterwards. Cheri has long been interested in learning and education, and the Lecture Series was right up her alley. Cheri not only served on the Board of Directors for this organization, but was also the brainchild, organizer and manager of the "lecture luncheons" for several years (from 1980 until 1994), ensuring all attendees were greeted, food was properly prepared and presented, and discussions flowed freely.

Cheri was a Charter Member of the Board of Directors for the North Platte Community Playhouse Guild, established in 1983, which is the managing non-profit for the Neville Center for the Performing Arts, located in the historic Fox Theatre building. This building was given to the North Platte Community Playhouse by Keith Neville's daughters in 1980. Over the next three years Cheri volunteered many hours assisting the group in raising \$250,000 to renovate the playhouse. The Neville Center opened in 1983.

to install a new heating system. They also removed barriers from the building to make it compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and increase access to the building. This included installing new stairs, a new elevator and adding a handicap accessible restroom. And they cleaned, and cleaned, and cleaned...

Most days during those years would find Cheri in her work boots, work clothes, and wearing heavy gloves cleaning and moving or removing rubble from the project. In April 2010, Cheri led a team of 24 volunteers in a team cleanup day at the facility, filling numerous dumpsters with debris. The basement was the first area to be made public-ready. An estimated 2,500 hours of volunteer work, and many hours of professional help led to completion of the studio level (basement). The original building, you will remember, had been opened in 1913. A ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Prairie Arts Center was held on December 12, 2013; the building was exactly 100 years old! The ceremony celebrated the completion of some classrooms, studios, restrooms, a wood shop, and the new elevator.

While the cleanup and restoration was going on at the Prairie Arts Center, in 2010 and 2011 Cheri also found time to serve as the reception committee for the Sheldon Statewide Exhibition of Text and Visual Art display at McKinley Elementary School. 2012 and 2013 found her with the same volunteer responsibilities for the Sheldon Statewide Exhibition entitled Railroads and the Making of Modern America.

Cheri assisted in the Light up the Arts Campaign in 2014. The team raised approximately \$400,000 which enabled the CUAC to receive a \$200,000 grant from the Peter Kiewet Foundation.

With an eye toward conservation of resources as well as historical significance and authenticity, Cheri made sure that much was saved during the demolition and restoration. As an example, Cheri and her husband purchased the beautiful, glass-paneled oak doors that graced the hallways of the 1924-2001 North Platte High School building, then donated them to the Prairie Arts Center where they were refinished as necessary and installed in the new Prairie Arts Center. In addition, Cheri and Alan have purchased and donated to the Prairie Arts Center many works of art from local artists as well as national and international artwork.

Work continued, even as classes were held and events were organized in the Studio Level. Now Cheri's time was spent sanding, painting, varnishing and cleaning on the First Floor. The First Floor Gallery and Gift Shop, complete with grand entry hall, gift shop and gallery, was completed in 2015. North Platte's Prairie Arts Center opened its first exhibition during the 2015 holiday season.

The Second Floor, which holds a library, a textile room, offices, catering kitchens, and a reception hall with patio, was opened in the Fall of 2017. The Third Floor Classrooms and Studios will be completed in 2019. Now in its final stages of renovation, The Prairie Arts Center has set the standard for and significantly contributes to the larger Revitalization effort in North Platte's Downtown area.

Cheri is also one of 100 Women Who Care North Platte, a group of women who gather four times a year for a one-hour meeting, learn about local charities, and each donate a \$100 check to a charity that the group selects. This combined donation of \$10,000 makes a real impact, without time-consuming fundraising events and planning. In addition, Cheri and her husband Alan are proud members of the Legacy Circle of Giving for the Great Plains Health Care Foundation.