

Local Woman Donates to the 761 Foundation for the Owatonna High School Music Department

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When Woody and Judy Meister moved to Owatonna in 1972, they noticed something unusual: the kids who participated in music seemed to be just as highly thought of as those who participated in sports. That wasn't the case in the small town high schools where they grew up. "We moved here for Woody's job, and we didn't know anyone in Owatonna. One way we became acquainted with the community was to read accounts of what young people were doing through articles in the local newspaper. We noticed that many of the kids who participated in sports were also in music. It seemed music was as 'cool' as any other activity." Though their kids were too young to join in, Woody and Judy started attending performances and were impressed by what they saw. When their daughters reached an age where they could participate, their parents encouraged them to partake—whether it be band, choir, and/or orchestra. Older daughter Lisa was in the elementary band for a few years and then decided that wasn't for her. And her mother said that was OK—at least she had that exposure. Daughter Laurie, however, found her niche in music. She took private piano lessons and also studied violin and harp under the outstanding instruction of Arnold Krueger, Bruce Wood, and Mark Gitch. She was also a choir member and OHS Caroler. Laurie is currently a professional musician in Houston, TX.

To thank the Owatonna High School music department for the outstanding opportunities given to her daughters (Woody passed away in 2008), and to celebrate the new high school, Judy contributed \$50,000 to set up a fund for instrument purchase and repair, lessons, camps, and other needs. "I met with the music faculty and told them I didn't have any specific directions on how to spend the funds. I figure they see where the needs are." This isn't the first sizable donation from the Meister family. As Laurie moved up to better instruments through the years, she donated a violin and a harp to OHS.

Though she gave the funds to the ISD 761 Foundation for the OHS music department two years ago, Judy was reluctant to make her gift public—she didn't want to be seen as bragging. "But then I thought if I made my donation known, maybe it would inspire others to give as well. We are very fortunate to have hometown corporate entities like the Wenger Foundation, Federated Insurance, Viracon, and others who have given sizable amounts to the new high school, but my donation shows that gifts from individuals can be important too. I am thankful for the opportunities given to my kids, and I am happy to make this gift to the OHS music department for future needs," Judy said.