

DONOR STORIES

Iola T. Dehrkoop ("Iola T. Dehrkoop Scholarship Fund")

Iola Dehrkoop was born on April 15, 1913 to Henry A. and Lizzie M. (Luze) Dehrkoop near White, South Dakota. As a small child she moved with her family back to a farm near Dysart, Iowa where her parents had both been raised.

Iola's early education was at a rural school about 1 3/4 miles from her home. It was a long way for a little girl to walk alone, and her parents often took her by horse and buggy. By the time Iola finished the 8th grade, her family had grown to include a brother and two sisters. She enrolled in High School in the Dysart Consolidated School system. In 1929, she graduated at the age of 16 as the valedictorian of her class. She continued her education at Iowa State Teachers College for two years majoring in primary education.

She started her teaching career at a rural school near Elberon, Iowa. Her first year she had 15 students. This meant teaching a wide variety of ages and abilities. She had the great challenge of making education interesting for beginners as well as helping her eighth grade students prepare for their state exams. Not only was she responsible for making lessons plans for all the students - she was also the janitor, playground supervisor, nurse, and counselor.

There was no electricity or water on the school grounds. The older children took turns getting a pail of water from the nearest farm. Corncobs and coal were stored in a shed, and the teacher was expected to have the coal burning stove lit and the school room warm when the children arrived at 9:00am.

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Iola stayed at this school for two years. The salary was very low, due in part to the economic depression of the times. She enjoyed the challenges there, but she was seeking a position that served primary children exclusively to be able to use her education to the greatest advantage. She found those opportunities when she later taught at La Moille, Brooklyn and Boone, Iowa.

Taking advantage of her summer breaks, Iola eventually earned a BA degree from Iowa State Teachers College. Her experience and credentials were such that she was soon recruited to teach in the well-recognized school system in Wilmette, Illinois. She now had children from families living along the North Shore of Chicago, and whose parents were executives or professionals in the city.

Though the social aspects were quite different from her experiences in Iowa, her professional challenges of helping children be successful in school were the same. Iola was active in professional organizations, and was respected as a mentor by many student teachers. For several years she gave scholarships for



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students attending college. She realized how some students struggled to pay their college tuition and expenses, and she wanted to ease that burden for them.

Iola continued at Wilmette until her retirement in 1978. She then moved to La Porte City to live with and care for her mother. She soon filled her “free time” with volunteering at the elementary school. She also volunteered at Covenant Hospital in Waterloo, and at the La Porte City Nursing Center. She was active in her church and the Women’s Club. In 1992 she was chosen “Woman of the Year” for her many contributions.

For relaxation, Iola enjoyed traveling to many parts of the world. She liked to share her adventures with children in the classroom. Some of those travels included trips to Alaska, Europe, Australia and South America.

In 1998, Iola gave up her home in La Porte City and moved to Lakeview Lodge of Friendship Village in Waterloo. Here she participated in activities and helped in the dining room when needed. She enjoyed visiting with friends and also kept close ties with her extended family of two sisters (May Williams and Irene Luxon), nieces and nephews. They loved her deeply, and have all experienced her generosity of life in many ways.

For 47 years, Iola enjoyed her career as a teacher. By establishing the Iola Dehrkoop Scholarship Fund with the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa, she hopes others will follow in her footsteps, and realize the joys and challenges of being an educator.

Iola enjoyed a long and varied career as a teacher. In one lifetime she went from having a mouse in the coal shed of a one room rural school, to a computer mouse available in every classroom.

Although technology continues to open a whole new world of learning, nothing can ever replace the encouraging soft touch or the friendly smile of a good teacher. Iola Dehrkoop’s generous gifts will allow many other children’s lives to be touched by a caring teacher.