

DONOR STORIES

TOM AND JANEÉ PETERSEN “Janeé Petersen Memorial Scholarship Fund”

Tom Peterson was born on November 1, 1962 in Hudson, Iowa to Bob and Margaret Peterson. Tom’s family owned Hudson Hardware Plumbing & Heating. Tom lived his entire life in Hudson and in 1981 he and his brother, David, purchased the business from his parents and they began running it full time.

Janeé Jensen was born January 3, 1963 to Larry and Jaqueline Jensen in Waterloo, Iowa. Larry was an engineer at John Deere, and Jackie went back to school later in life to become a teacher eventually teaching math at West High School.

Tom and Janée were married November 5, 1988.

Tom was busy with the plumbing and heating business, while Janée was getting her teaching career started. Janée taught at Expo High School in Waterloo, a school dedicated to helping students who don’t fit into the regular classroom setting.

Tom and Janée welcomed a baby boy to the family on July 9, 1993. A daughter, Courtney, joined the family on August 1, 1996. Janée enrolled her children in the same day-care at Expo that some of her own students used.

Janeé loved her students at Expo High School. She was always early to school, and knew that there was much more to teaching than earning a paycheck. She took special interest in students who seemed to be struggling the most. With her extra attention, those students would often turn their lives around, simply because she showed them that she cared. It was not uncommon for Janée to tutor students after school, or to give students rides if needed. Janée was known to visit a student’s home if they didn’t show up for school in the morning to make sure everything was all right.

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In addition to their careers, Tom and Janée kept busy with other community involvements. Tom was a member of the state Plumbing/Heating/Cooling Board of Directors from 1984-1999 and served as that board’s president in 1989. He has been a volunteer firefighter and member of Ducks Unlimited for more than 20 years.

Janeé was on the board of Humpty Dumpty Preschool in Hudson, and volunteered the majority of her non-work time to help her students at Expo.

On January 12, 1998, Janée Peterson passed away after a battle with cancer. At the time of her death, she was working on her Masters in Administration at the University of Northern Iowa. All she had left to complete was her thesis. The University awarded her an honorary masters degree posthumously in the spring of 1998.

Janée was so well thought of by her students that many still visit her grave and leave flowers and notes to their well-respected mentor.

After Janée's death, Tom established the Janée Peterson Memorial Scholarship Fund with the Community Foundation of Waterloo/Cedar Falls and Northeast Iowa. It is his hope that this scholarship will help students at Expo and West High schools go on to college to become a teacher. He hopes that with the help of this scholarship, students may find a passion for teaching and continue in Janée's footsteps.

*Historical vignette prepared by the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa.