

NCCFF Selects Two Philanthropists of the Year at Its 2023 Annual Meeting

Summer wouldn't be the same in Nebraska City without the Nebraska City Jaycees and the massive Fourth of July Fireworks Show they have put on for the past 36 years.

This is why the Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund (NCCFF) named this longstanding service organization as one of its two 2023 Philanthropists of the Year during the Fund's recent annual meeting. The second Philanthropists of the Year winner for 2023 is Nile and Mary Farris, owners of Valentino's restaurant in Nebraska City, who are well known for their many philanthropic works over the past 30 years.

This is the first time in its 23-year history that the NCCFF has given out two Philanthropist of the Year Awards.

During its award presentation, the NCCFF lauded the Nebraska City Jaycees for the thousands of hours its members, both past and present, have put into its annual world-class Fourth of July Show and accompanying daylong festivities in Steinhart Park. This event

has become a summer tradition in Nebraska City bringing together community members and out-of-towners to enjoy the patriotic festivities. In combination with the Jaycee Youth Softball Program, the Nebraska City Jaycees have spent decades putting some sizzle into the Nebraska City summers.

During the NCCFF'S recent annual meeting, Loren Steinman, president of the Nebraska City Jaycees for the past eight years, accepted the NCCFF Philanthropists of the Year award on behalf of this service organization. Loren said he was literally born into the Jaycees. His parents, Daryl and Laura Steinman, are both senators and past presidents of this organization.

"I went to my first Jaycee convention when I was five days old," Loren said, laughing. By being the son of such enthusiastic and active Jaycee members, Loren has literally participated in this organization all his life. He officially became a member at 18. "No matter what your situation, you should always try to put time back



Several Nebraska City Jaycee members, both past and current, were at the NCCFF annual meeting to celebrate receiving the NCCFF Philanthropists of the Year Award. Pictured here, left to right, are Bryan Turner, Laura Liesemeyer, Loren Steinman, current Jaycee President; Lynette Prouty, Laura Steinman, Gail Walford, Duane Koehlmoos and Paul Stevenson.

into your community,” Loren said.

Since 41 is the cutoff age for Jaycee membership, many of the older Jaycees still join in to help construct the fireworks show putting in hundreds more volunteer hours over the years. Some of them have been there for every show over these past three decades.

Loren said the fireworks show costs around \$15,000. He said funding comes from sources all over Nebraska City.

“Nebraska City Utilities puts a flyer in a Spring bill mailing asking for donations for the fireworks show,” Loren said. “The donations that this creates is one of our biggest funding sources.”

In addition to this, donation cans are set out around town in stores and gas stations. Loren said competitions occur to see which location can generate the most money.

As the second 2023 NCCFF Philanthropists of the Year Award winners, Nile and Mary Farris were praised by the NCCFF for the massive amount of donations they have made in the past 30 years through their restaurant, Valentino’s. Scores of community organizations, schools, hospitals and churches have been the recipients of these donations, estimated at around 100 a year. Nile recalls that one year he donated pizza to 28 ‘After Prom’ parties. Donations have also gone out to the Jaycees, the Otoe County Fair, 4-H clubs and area scout troops.

Speaking of the scouts, Lile was a boy scout leader for 16 years. “That’s lots of Eagle Scout projects,” he said. He is also a 30-year plus member of the Knights of Columbus and St. Mary’s Catholic Church Parrish Council. He was on the local United Way Board for 25 years.

Lile and Mary have been married for 40 years and raised three children. They now have six grandchildren. Mary has been an educator in Nebraska City for the past 35 years, the first 33 years at NCECBVI and the past two years at Lourdes Central Catholic.

It’s a little-known fact that Mary was the very first Miss Applejack in 1980. Both the Farris daughters, Emily and Kathryn, also served as Miss Applejacks.

In the mid-90’s, the town of Syracuse asked Mary to help with revitalizing its German Fest. She suggested jumpstarting the Little Miss German Fest pageant. “It worked,” Mary said. “Families love to see their children in a pageant.” Over the years, Mary has helped judge local youth scholarship pageants in other communities.

“Both the Nebraska City Jaycees and Nile and Mary Farris have brightened the lives of Nebraska City residents for decades,” said Melissa Turner, NCCFF Advisory Committee Chair. “This simply wouldn’t be as wonderful and fun a place to live without their hard work.”



Nile and Mary Farris were surprised at the annual meeting by the attendance of several family members. Back row, left to right: Marcus & Emily Augustin, award recipients Mary & Nile Farris, and Rob & Melissa Farris. Front row: grandchildren Neva & Liam Augustin and Owen & Isabelle Farris.