

# DONOR STORIES

## DON AND SHIRLEY KNISS

### “The Don and Shirley Kniss Scholarship Fund”

From the time Shirley Kniss was a little girl, she knew that she wanted to be a teacher. Her love of children grew immensely through the years, even though she was never blessed with any biological children of her own. Instead, she considered each of her students “her children.” Shirley’s dedication to these youngsters eventually inspired the establishment of the Don and Shirley Kniss Scholarship Fund at the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa.



DON AND SHIRLEY  
KNISS

Don Kniss was born on December 22, 1929, to Kenneth and Opal Kniss in Waterloo, Iowa. Kenneth worked at Black’s Department Store and Walnut Dairy before joining John Deere. He eventually retired from Deere after many years of service.

Shirley (Stamy) Kniss was born to Keller and Anita Stamy on July 1, 1933. Anita had been born in Nebraska and Keller was born in Pennsylvania. They moved to Des Moines, Cedar Rapids and finally settled in Waterloo as part of the Western Weighing & Inspecting Bureau for the railroad.

Don and Shirley met while attending Waterloo West High school. With Don graduating in 1951 and Shirley in 1948, the couple was briefly separated during Don’s service in the army from 1951-53. Don was stationed in France and Germany during the Korean War and came home safely in 1953.

*“Shirley loved her teaching career in the public schools as well as the Sunday school program of their church”*

Shirley spent Don’s military years at college and graduated from Iowa State Teacher’s College in 1953. Following her college education, Shirley took her first teaching job in Shell Rock, Iowa. She stayed with the school two years before starting her teacher career in Waterloo in 1955, when she began teaching at Maywood School. Eventually she became a full-time teacher at Kingsley Elementary School.

Don and Shirley were married on June 15, 1956 and spent their lifetime in Waterloo.

Don followed in his father’s footsteps and began a distinguished career with John Deere Product Engineering Center. He retired in 1984 after 28 years of service. Shirley loved her teaching career in the public schools as well as in the Sunday school program of their church. She was also a member of ADR Sorority. Shirley took care of children that needed extra attention, often giving them items such as clothes or school supplies if their families could not afford them.

Shirley retired in 1989 from teaching, but always kept “her children” close to her heart.

Following Don and Shirley’s retirements, they enjoyed several wonderful years together, vacationing in numerous locations and enjoying their home in Fort Meyers, Florida.

Shirley passed away in October 2000. Don passed away in February 2011. However, their giving spirit will continue even after death, because they both wanted to make sure that someone was financially providing for the future generations of children.

The couple established the Don and Shirley Kniss Scholarship in Shirley's honor to support students from Waterloo Community Public Schools as they continue on to a higher-level education.

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