

# DONOR STORIES

## DONNA & GREG HICKMAN

### “Donna R. and Greg Hickman Fund”



DONNA, GREG &  
KATHY HICKMAN

Donna R. Hickman was born and raised on a farm between Eldora and Grundy Center, Iowa. The first eight years of her education were in a one-room schoolhouse a mile south of her home. Most of the time, there were no more than twelve students attending the school.

It was a sheltered type of education, however, the advantage was that Donna was able to request one-on-one time with the teacher and gain as much knowledge as she could absorb. She attended Eldora High School for the first two years of high school and Grundy Center for her last two years.

Donna began her career in the financial business as a banking, collection, credit manager and loan officer. This served as an excellent background for the business profession as well as the “people” profession.

In 1962, Donna gave birth to her first and only son, Gregory. Greg was born with a very complex congenital heart condition. His first open heart surgery was at the age of four. It was performed at the University of Iowa Hospital, and it was believed at the time that the procedure would allow Greg to live until nine or ten years of age.

In November 1971, Greg became ill and was in and out of Sartori Hospital in Cedar Falls, Iowa. He was eventually taken by ambulance to the University of Iowa Hospital. He had succumb to meningitis. Although appropriate IV therapy was started, Greg showed signs of decreasing consciousness and focal neurological changes.

*“...fame comes from what we do for ourselves; however, greatness comes from what we do for others.”*

On Thanksgiving Day, 1971, Greg was considered terminal. On January 6, 1972, Greg was transferred in a comatose state to Schoitz Hospital in Waterloo, Iowa. He was unresponsive, did not verbalize and had brief episodes of tremors and stiffening. Suffering from incontinence and only able to eat pureed foods, Greg’s home was a facility at the corner of Ridgeway and Kimball Avenue in Waterloo until June 16, 1972.

His first signs of consciousness happened on Mother’s Day, 1972, when he whispered “Mom.” Needless to say, Donna was overjoyed. Since that day, Greg has had four open-heart surgeries; one at the University of Iowa Hospital and three at St. Mary’s Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota, the last being in September 1999. Staff members at the Mayo Clinic have said they consider Greg a walking miracle. Both Greg and Donna are forever grateful to Dr. Ronald Roth and all the therapists and nurses that cared for him, as well as anyone who even just took the time to give him a smile.

In 1970, Donna had changed fields to work in the automobile industry as an office and business manager in Cedar Falls. She worked in this field for 17 years before retiring in 1988 and enjoyed it very much. She felt blessed and very thankful that her employer, John Deery Sr., was considerate and flexible regarding the time off she needed during the time when Greg was very ill.

Upon retiring from the automobile industry in 1988, Donna pursued a career as an investor, which allowed her time to be available to care for Greg. She had purchased her first home in 1967 for \$12,000. At that time, the seller was willing to negotiate and carry a contract so Donna and Greg could purchase it and enjoy having their own home. This kind woman was Donna's inspiration for pursuing real estate. Many of her homes and multiple units were sold to first time homebuyers and rental investors, which allowed her to give them the same opportunity she had been given. Donna thoroughly enjoyed her experiences as a real estate investor. She said, "I met wonderful friends and enjoyed the connections I made during the rental, purchasing and selling process."

In October 1987, Greg met a very nice lady named Kathy Heidemann through a mutual friend. In October 1990, they were married and moved into College Square Manor where they still reside and are enjoyed by all today. Greg and Kathy's compatibility is beautiful and unequalled. Their lives exemplify that each day is a gift from God, and to give more, live simply and expect less.

Donna has attributed her giving heart to her father, who was a very nurturing, loving and caring person, and her idol and mentor. He taught her to have a strong work ethic and to be true to herself. He also believed that serving others was the highest calling people have through Christ, and that fame comes from what we do for ourselves, however greatness comes from what we do for others. Now, through the Donna R. and Greg Hickman fund at the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa, Donna and Greg will be able to serve the community they love in perpetuity.

Donna passed away at the age of 75 on May 27, 2013.

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