



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 12, 2016

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Page 1 of 2

A dedication to very special members

Naperville, IL — At an intimate ceremony on Sunday, Aug. 28, a dedication was held in remembrance of longtime and charitable Naperville Heritage Society members, John and Kay Stephens. Friends and family gathered to celebrate the Stephens' for their outstanding service and commitment as NHS board members with a ceremony, garden tour and reception. In celebration of Kay's service to Naper Settlement's gardens, a plaque was revealed in front of the Weed Ladies garden, named The Kay L. Stephens Memorial Garden, in her honor.

John and Kay's love and dedication to the Naperville Heritage Society will live on through the generous gift the couple had donated after Kay's passing in 2014. Kay was one of the first people to include the Naperville Heritage Society in her estate plan through the Caroline Martin Mitchell Legacy Circle. Their gift supports future historians by funding education and preservation programs at Naper Settlement.

John and Kay's daughter Dr. Susan Stephens spoke during the ceremony and touched on her parent's appreciation for everyone they had worked with at the Naperville Heritage Society. "If our parents were standing here today, reflecting upon their involvement in the Heritage Society, they would say that many, many people were responsible for its success... When there was something to be done, someone always stepped up," said Dr. Susan Stephens.

For 45 years, Kay supported the Naperville Heritage Society through her volunteer efforts that included improving the main public gardens at Naper Settlement. Kay was also one of the first floral designers for the Weed Ladies, a group of women that make dried and silk floral arrangements to benefit Naper Settlement's education and preservation programs.

"Kay set the bar high," said Nancy King, a fellow Weed Lady. "Her impact is everywhere on the Settlement grounds. She worked to create a beautiful natural setting to share the story of Naperville."

King remembers the very first time she met Kay. "At our sales, we greet customers and ask them if they are familiar with the Weed Ladies," King said. "But guess who I asked that question? Kay Stephens! She was gracious but amused."

John Stephens was a Naperville Heritage Society board member for decades and served as Board President from 1993-2002, which is longer than any other Board President served. Current NHS Board Director, Dave Kelsch remembers John's commitment to the position.

“John really took the helm and made [the Naperville Heritage Society] an organization,” said Kelsch, who succeeded as Board President for five years after John's passing in 2002. “Not because he was trying to do that, but he was just so good no one else could fill his shoes.”

John and Kay's legacy will be carried on by their generous planned donation and memorials scattered around Naper Settlement. Along with Kay's plaque, there is a horse-chestnut tree that is dedicated to Kay and a Black Hills spruce tree that has been dedicated to John on Naper Settlement's grounds near Aurora Avenue.

“I couldn't think of any couple or people that could be more worthy of this dedication,” said Kelsch. “They are just fantastic people. Kind and generous. Just the kind of people you really admire and look up to.”

About Naper Settlement

Naper Settlement is a nationally accredited, award-winning outdoor museum set on 12 magnificent acres in the heart of Naperville, where history comes to play and community comes to connect. For more information, visit www.napersettlement.org or call (630) 420-6010.

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