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## ENDOWMENT TO SUPPORT MUSIC EDUCATION

### McGavock Family Endowment creates annual grant program for public schools

LA CROSSE, WI, October 7, 2014— In the hope of inspiring greater creativity within music education and lifelong appreciation of music, a local family has created a new fund to support music education projects in La Crosse public schools.

The McGavock Family Endowment for Music Education will provide annual funding for a program or project to enhance music education within the School District of La Crosse. The fund and grant program will be operated by the La Crosse Public Education Foundation.

The endowment is named in memory of Ronald and Philip McGavock. Ronnie and Philip were brothers who were born during the Great Depression and grew up on the south side of Chicago. Coming from humble and challenging surroundings, both brothers started working at the early age of six to help support their family, including jobs at the local train station handling luggage for travelers.



Ronnie McGavock

Ronnie eventually took a position at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago and won an employee holiday entertainment contest. This led to a career as a professional entertainer under the stage name of Ronnie Eastman, including headlining at major clubs throughout the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. He also performed on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*. Ronnie was performing at the Melody Mill in La Crosse when he met the love of his life, Yvonne Fry. Ronnie and Yvonne made La Crosse their home and they were blessed with their daughter, Melissa (Klein), a 1985 graduate of La Crosse Central High School.

Philip moved to La Crosse to attend university and be near his brother Ronnie and his family. Philip went on to a career as a music educator in his native Illinois and was a member of several music societies. Philip died in 2013.

Ronnie became a successful real estate agent but was a lifelong learner and music was an integral part of his life. From his act, to his musical car, to his home music studio, music touched his life over and over again. It was part of him. From big band, to marching band, to his daughter's favorite 80's tunes, he loved music. Ronnie died in 1993.

The McGavock family started this endowment in memory of Ronnie and Philip to help expand creativity and imagination within music education in La Crosse. Melissa is blessed with many wonderful memories of her father and hopes this endowment can lay the foundation for a lifelong appreciation of music for many young women and men within the La Crosse public schools.

*David Stoeffler, executive director of the La Crosse Public Education Foundation, said the family's gift "will have a lasting impact in our schools and on our children." Stoeffler added: "Music can be a powerful inspiration in people's lives and the McGavock Family Endowment will help make La Crosse a better place."*

The endowment amount was not disclosed. The amount of the new grant may vary, but will be awarded as part of the foundation's annual grants program for classrooms and schools. Last year, the foundation provided more than \$43,000 in grants, plus provided nearly \$22,000 to help students overcome roadblocks to achievement in areas such as nutrition, transportation and co-curricular support.

The La Crosse Public Education Foundation's mission is to enhance learning opportunities for students in the School District of La Crosse and to promote community understanding and support for public education.

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NOTE: Photo available of Ronnie McGavock upon request.