

F. Neil Puhl Journalism Scholarship

Neil Puhl set high standards for his journalism students. He loved teaching and loved his students even more. His passion for teaching is reflective of how former students viewed him long after they enjoyed him as an instructor. In 2004, students from the classes of 1956 – 1958 organized a card shower in commemoration of his 90th birthday. Upon his death in 2005, many heartfelt expressions were sent to family members describing the impact Neil had on their lives. All this inspired family members to endow an annual scholarship in Neil's name. The first F. Neil Puhl Journalism Scholarship was awarded to a deserving high school senior this spring.

“Dad always was pleased to hear from former students. He enjoyed hearing how they had used their journalism skills learned in his classes; whether the note was from a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, a scientist who wrote research reports, or a community volunteer who edited a club newsletter,” stated Fran Hermanson, Puhl's daughter.

Neil received his B.A. degree from South Dakota State College in Brookings and M.A. degree in journalism from the University of Minnesota. He taught school for 39 years. He taught science, mathematics and journalism at Webster, S.D., Spencer and Creston, IA., before coming to Mason City in 1949. He was the English and journalism instructor at Mason City High School and his wife, Viola, also taught in the school district for years at the elementary level.

Neil served as the language arts chairman for six years. He taught summer high school journalism workshops at the University of Iowa. He served as president of the South Dakota and the Iowa High School Press Association, receiving in 1974 one of IHSPA's first Kenneth Stratton Awards for Distinguished Service to Iowa Scholastic Journalism. Last fall he was named, posthumously, to the Iowa High School Press Association Hall of Fame.

Neil's daughter, Fran, and daughter-in-law, Dr. Susan Puhl, hope this scholarship will exemplify the dedication Neil had for his students. The scholarship is being awarded to students who excelled in journalism and school publication in high school.