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FLORENCE HISTORICAL FOUNDATION PRESENTS 2019 MARDI GRAS IN FLORENCE!

# FLORENCE DAYS

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VISIT OFTEN: [FlorenceDays.org](http://FlorenceDays.org) | [FlorenceReceptionHalls.com](http://FlorenceReceptionHalls.com) | [HistoricFlorence.org](http://HistoricFlorence.org) | [FlorenceTheater.org](http://FlorenceTheater.org)

## FLORENCE'S OWN MATT MASON NAMED NEBRASKA STATE POET & PARADE'S GRAND MARSHAL



Governor Pete Ricketts announced this past January 30 that Matt Mason of Omaha has been designated as Nebraska's next State Poet. The selection process was led by the Nebraska Arts Council, Humanities Nebraska, and the Nebraska Library Commission, a group of state agencies and organizations that together presented finalists to the Governor for consideration. Mason has been installed as Nebraska State Poet 2019-2023 during a formal ceremony in January.

"From Willa Cather to Ted Kooser, Nebraska has been

home to many talented authors, artists, and poets," said Governor Pete Ricketts when he announced this past January that Matt Mason has been designated as Nebraska's State Poet. "As our next State Poet," Ricketts continued in a press release, "Matt will help celebrate Nebraska and bring our state together around our shared love of the Good Life."

The Nebraska State Poet is selected based on criteria that commands artistic excellence and exemplary professionalism that has been demonstrated by significant publications and special honors; an established

history of community service in the advancement of poetry in Nebraska; and the ability to present poetry and interact effectively with a public audience.

Mason is executive director of the Nebraska Writers Collective, through which he has run the Louder Than a Bomb: Great Plains youth poetry festival each year since 2011. He is a former board president of the Nebraska Center for the Book and has served as the Nebraska State Coordinator for

Poetry Out Loud, a Poetry Foundation/National Education Association program. He also edits PoetryMenu.com, a listing of every poetry event in the state of Nebraska.

Additionally, Mason has won a Pushcart Prize and two Nebraska Book Awards

(Continued on page 3)



## The Florentine Players

by Riley Cullen

### Pulling Back the Curtain on Florences' Favorite Performers

Melodrama—the word connotes larger than life emotions and sensational plot twists. In North Omaha, it's also a reminder of one of our community's longest-standing traditions: watching the Florentine Players perform their annual melodrama at Florence City Hall.

Although the first iteration of the Florentine Players formed 90 years ago in 1929, the Players as we know them started staging shows in 1964 and became an official arm of the Florence Historical Foundation on June 18, 1986.

Since that date, the group has expanded their directory of dramas. "We put on numerous productions throughout the year, but we are most famous for our annual Melodrama in May,"

said Cecelia Sass, a current board member for the Players who serves on their membership committee.

"We also bring to life a farce in August, a mystery in October and we added a drama in February to highlight the ever-growing talents of Florence with the Florence Community Theater series. For the children and young at heart of the community, October is our Trunk-or-Treat event, and in November we host a Breakfast with Santa."

Florence families have been laughing and crying along with the Players for years, but few know of the decades-long struggle they faced

(Continued on page 8)

**MARDI GRAS in FLORENCE**  
59th ANNUAL  
**FLORENCE DAYS PARADE**  
**1PM SAT MAY 11, 2019**  
(SEE CENTER SPREAD FOR DETAILS)



# Letter from the President

Dear Friends of Florence

WOW ..., how fast a year can pass. Many small projects were accomplished along with the normal upkeep of the Historical sights last year. Thanks to the Board for your time and efforts in keeping the Historical Foundation alive and well.

A couple big projects are planned this year so your (Friends and members of Florence) support is greatly needed and appreciated.

Our hats off to the Florentine Players on such a successful year with great productions. The talent of the performers were spectacular. KUDOS

Best of luck for another successful year.

I hope you all come out and show your support for the Florence Days Parade. This years theme is "Mardi Gras in Florence"

The Florence Historical Foundation continues to work hard to preserve the history and educate the community and our visitors about our small town of Florence. Don't forget that the Florence Depot and the Florence Bank are open every weekend during the summer months.

Please consider sending your support again this year if you have not already done so to help continue our efforts. Your membership dollars help us preserve our Historic Florence and are Tax deductible for the 2019 year.

Remember. You are a part of Florence History

Enjoy your 59th Annual Florence Days!

*Dick Brown*

Dick Brown  
President, Florence Historical Foundation

# How You Can Help Keep Your 'Hood' Safe & Crime-Free

AN APPEAL TO YOU, DEAR READER, TO JOIN THE OMAHA COALITION OF CITIZEN PATROLS

by John Lemen

We see lots of folks voicing their concerns about crime in their neighborhoods on Nextdoor, Facebook and other social media sites – here's an opportunity to actually DO something about it!

## WHAT IS THE CITIZEN'S PATROL?

A citizen patrol is often described as a mobile neighborhood watch program. Trained citizen patrollers drive through the neighborhood in visibly-marked vehicles, observe conditions in the neighborhood, and report any suspicious activity or situations of danger or emergency to law enforcement. We do not leave our vehicles and we do not confront or apprehend anyone. Citizen patrols often work together with law enforcement to conduct special "joint effort" patrols in their neighborhoods during special occasions such as Halloween, and the first and last days of school. Last year, the 20 members of the Florence Citizens Patrol drove over 6000 miles watching for suspicious activity in the residential and business areas of our community!

## WHAT IS THE FLORENCE AREA?

Boundaries have been established by the City and the Police Department. Our boundaries are Forest Lawn Avenue / Potter Street on the south, Cook Street on the north, 28<sup>th</sup> Street on the east, and Mormon Bridge Road on the west. Signs are visibly posted in each neighborhood where a citizen patrol is active, identifying the neighborhood as a "patrolled area."

## HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE?

Each person usually patrols two or three times a month, and it takes about two hours to patrol our area, so the time commitment is very small.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

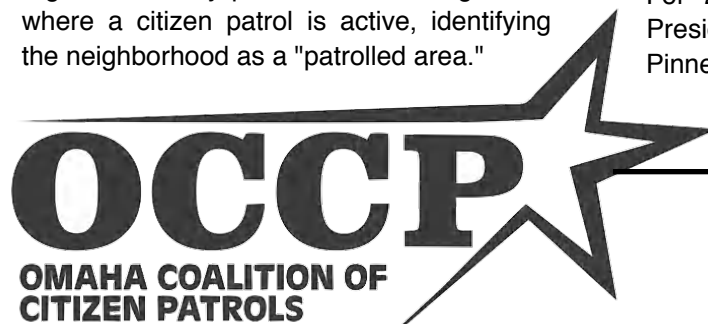
We go out with at least two people in a vehicle; we patrol any day of the week, at any time that works out for the teams. If two teams schedule a patrol at the same day and time, they coordinate efforts so that one team patrols the North-South streets and avenues, and the other covers the East-West streets. Each vehicle is marked with magnetic signs, and the teams carry photo ID badges. The teams can use scanners or a smartphone app to monitor Police Department radio traffic, and use their personal cell phones to contact 911 to report suspicious activity they encounter.

## WHO ARE WE?

We are fathers, mothers, grandparents, single, married or divorced people of every race and creed. We are a diverse group of neighbors that live in and care about the Florence community, and want it to be a safe place to live and work. We also enjoy getting to know our neighbors on a more personal level and love making new friends. For 2019, our officers are Linda Workman - President, John Lemen – Vice President, Terry Pinneo - Treasurer, and Jerry Zulfer – Secretary.

(Continued on page 12)

Florentine Players  
56th Annual Melodrama!  
MAY 3,4,5 & 10,11,12  
C'mon Eileen or  
Charley & the Barley Beer Factory  
Comedy/Musical (Rated PG)  
tickets at [florencetheater.org](http://florencetheater.org)



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Tell them you saw their ad in the Florence Days newspaper.

**DON'T MISS THE FAIR AT NORTH BOWL AFTER THE PARADE!**

Thank you members & advertisers! Your dollars help preserve the rich history of Florence



## Florence Historical Foundation Membership Form

Your Tax Deductible Membership maintains the Bank of Florence, Toll House, Florence Train Depot Museum, Florence Fire Barn & traditions such as the Florence Days Parade

Name and/or Business Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Membership: E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Individual \$15.00  
Family \$25.00  
Business \$50.00  
Large Corp. \$100.00  
Angel Level \$1,000.00

\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Tax Deductible Amount

If this is a memorial gift, please add the name below:

~ Checks payable to: Florence Historical Foundation, P.O. Box 12331, Omaha, NE 68112 ~



(Matt Mason State Poet continued from front page)

(for Poetry in 2007 and Anthology in 2006) for his own work. He represented Nebraska as a member of six teams at the National Poetry Slam, and he represented the United States as an organizer of the U.S. Department of State poetry programing in Romania, Nepal, Botswana, and Belarus.

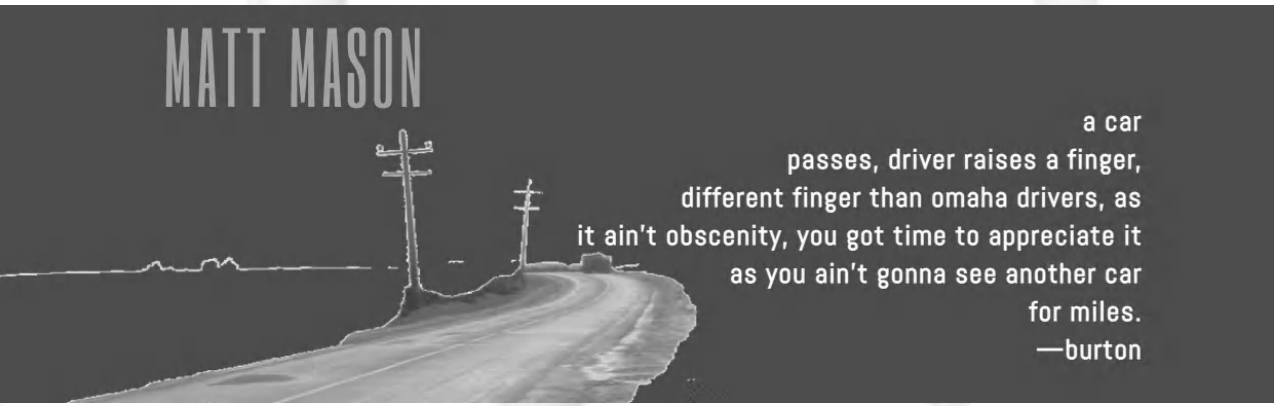
"Poetry and poetry advocacy have been my life's real project, so being honored like this is amazing and humbling," Mason said. "I hope to get into communities around the state to do readings with authors there. I want to get to the different counties, to the Air Force Base, to different crowds and bring entertaining poetry as well as remind everyone of the poets already there in their communities."

As Nebraska State Poet, Mason will serve a five-year renewable term as an advocate for poetry, literacy, and literature in Nebraska. His duties will include giving public presentations and readings, leading workshops and

discussions, and providing other outreach in schools, libraries, literary festivals, and various venues in rural and urban communities throughout the state.

The position of Nebraska Poet Laureate was established in 1921 when John G. Neihardt, whose most famous work includes "Black Elk Speaks" and "Cycle of the West," was appointed by the Legislature. In 1982, William Kloefkorn was appointed as Nebraska State Poet by Governor Charles Thone. Kloefkorn served as State Poet for 29 years until his death in May 2011. Twyla M. Hansen, winner of two Nebraska Book Awards and co-director of the website, "Poetry from the Plains: A Nebraska Perspective," served from 2013-2018.

To learn more about Matt Mason, visit his website at [matt.midverse.com](http://matt.midverse.com) or his official page at the Humanities Nebraska website. For information about hosting the state poet with the Nebraska Arts Council's "Presenting the State Poet" grants, visit [artscouncil.nebraska.gov](http://artscouncil.nebraska.gov) or contact the office at (402) 595-2122.



# MASON'S POETRY FOR EVERY GOOD PARENT



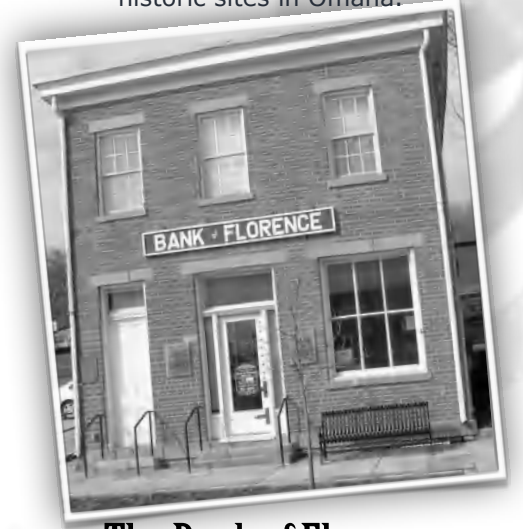
Or, An Impartial Book Recommendation

*The Baby That Ate Cincinnati* is a collection of poems about parenthood. And horror movies. Former Nebraska State Poet Twyla Hansen wrote that in this book, "Matt Mason gifts us with the shock and awe of becoming a first-time parent. We experience the exhaustion, introspection, and reality of making life out of chaos in these masterfully crafted poems, ranging from the hyperbolic and hilarious ('thunder infant,' 'she has come to eat your brains') to the tender and lyrical ('I would carry this child/ on bare feet if I had to, I would/ keep the wind from touching her'). Mason's poems overwhelmingly celebrate the ages-old and universal language know as love."

~ MARDI GRAS IN FLORENCE ~

## florence history

Florence is the oldest city in Nebraska and the home to some of the most historic sites in Omaha.



### The Bank of Florence

Established in 1856, The Bank of Florence is the oldest bank in the state of Nebraska.

Currently a museum, the bank is open for tours 11am-3pm on Saturdays and Sundays from mid-May thru August 31.

**Call 402-453-4462**

to schedule a private group tour.



## Two Historic Museums Open on Parade Day

Open every Saturday and Sunday Starting Parade Day | May 11, 2019

**BANK OF FLORENCE MUSEUM**

8502 N. 30th St. | SA & SU 11am-3pm

**FLORENCE TRAIN DEPOT MUSEUM**

29th & Dick Collins Rd. | SA & SU 11am-3pm



### Florence Train Depot Museum

After loving care and extensive repair, this quaint building stands proudly as a charming relic of bygone days. Visit the Florence Train Depot Museum from 11am-3pm on Saturdays and Sundays beginning on Parade Day!



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# Together We Can Do So Much

by Joan Allen, Northern Lights Garden Club

**Participation Makes the 30th Street Beautification Efforts Successful. And Fun!**

Have you ever counted the number of set-in flower beds installed in Florence since the 30<sup>th</sup> Street streetscape renovation began in 2012? Twelve? Twenty? Try twenty-nine. In 2012 the city installed bioretention beds (an area that will capture and disperse filtered rain water more gradually into the sewer system), and twenty-two garden beds along 30<sup>th</sup> Street in Florence; therefore, providing plenty of space and opportunity for plants and flowers to be added for aesthetic beauty. Unfortunately, the beds could also become weedy litter traps if not properly maintained. Not a pretty sight!

With the effort of businesses, non-profit organizations, families and individuals who have volunteered to maintain the beds, these twenty-nine beds have been saved from becoming weedy, overgrown, unwanted pits

know your neighbor/businesses effort. Prairie Piecegoods and Rock Bottom Book Store (8523 N. 30<sup>th</sup> St.) will be set up as a refreshment station, offering hot dogs, beverages, rest and fellowship throughout the workday.

The Florence Community-Wide Garden Beds Workday is scheduled for Saturday, May 25, 2019. Rain date will be Sunday, May 26. Hours of volunteering will run 9 AM to 4 PM. Bedding plants, pails, fertilizer, yard waste bags, water and mulch will be provided. Early shift work will consist of cleaning beds of litter and weeding in preparation for planting. Soil will be amended as needed. Next, plants obtained from Hanscom Nursery and other sources will be available for planting and, finally, watering and mulching. Come and go as you like throughout the day.



**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**FLORENCE COMMUNITY-WIDE GARDEN  
BEDS WORK DAY**  
**Sat, May 25, 9AM to 4 PM**  
"many hands make light work"

Northern Lights Garden Club (NLGC) has a reputation for dynamic speakers presenting interesting and timely programs. Topics for 2019 include recycling and food

waste (Amanda Humes, Engineering Manager, ConAgra), day lilies (Sherry Lust), a garden walk, on-site flower cutting and arranging from the garden of a member and led by Mel Velasquez (Melrose Floral), and a grass walk field trip, led by Walt Schacht, Professor, Rangeland Ecology and Management, UNL. Upcoming NLGC program schedule is posted at the Florence Library, American National Bank, HyVee Convenience Store, and Harold's Koffee House. Northern Lights Garden Club Facebook page is coming soon!

We are always looking for new members. Guests and drop-ins are welcome. We meet the third Tuesday of the months of February through November (no meeting in December or January) at 6:30 PM on the lower level of the Mormon Trail Center at 3215 State St., Omaha, NE 68112, unless otherwise indicated. Dues are \$15 for individual/\$21 family.

A trivia question: How many garden beds are in want of being adopted in Florence? Answer: SIX. Adoption can range from a commitment of total care to as little as monitoring a bed for litter, weeds or watering.



Questions about the NLGC or volunteering? Interested in adopting a garden bed? Call/text Joan Allen at 402-350-3300 or JoanAllen@gmail.com. "He that plants trees loves others beside himself." Dr. Thomas Fuller (1654-1734)

of trash. Although many of the planting beds have been (partly or fully) adopted there is room for improvement. Our garden club is doing its best to fill in the gaps to create a continuous stream of colorful and pleasing planting along our business district where. But the job is great, and our numbers are few. Therefore, we are planning a community-wide work day in late spring to weed, prepare and plant. Because 30<sup>th</sup> Street is a state highway, we are eligible for free annuals from Hanscom Nursery, and mulch from the City of Omaha--but no labor help. This is where you come in. We hope many of you--our community--- take this opportunity to help beautify Florence. Come with gloves, hand tools, kneeling pads, shovels--ready to lend a hand. Give the amount of time and effort you are comfortable giving. Let's make this a ONE-DAY, community-wide, get-to-



# What is That Charming Building?

## SPOTLIGHT ON PRAIRIE MECHANICAL CORPORATION

As a community, we need to make a constant effort to improve upon the historic charm, quality and aesthetic of our proud Florence, Minne-Lusa and surrounding neighborhoods. With all the recent concern expressed among community leaders at NOCC and other venues about Florence maintaining a certain aesthetic deserving of a historic destination that draws visitors from all across the country, we thought



this would be a good time to feature one business that truly represents the ideal toward which we as a community strive.

This brief article serves to spotlight the successful Prairie Mechanical Corporation, which touts itself as "a people company." Little wonder, from what we've observed.

We've done a little cursory research, but haven't yet found much deserving of a thesis but what we have learned -- by "we" I mean the members of our newspaper team -- that rumors of bygone days abound about how guests and tenants of the old hotel used to relax in big rocking chairs on that beautiful old front porch enjoying the evening sun and a glass of lemonade while shooting the breeze with neighbors. Well, that's what we've heard.

Launched in 2002, Prairie Mechanical began with two men in service vans. Strategic acquisitions of Furey Sheet Metal in 2005 and Zabel Plumbing in 2008 allowed them to expand their services. Today, they are proud to be one of only three full-service Mechanical Contractors serving the Greater Omaha Area.

Nearly 20 years later Prairie Mechanical employs 200 loyal team members and expanded their business into a veritable compound that today houses a fine enterprise.

Prairie Mechanical Administrator Dawn Holmstedt explained that the owner restored the buildings to reflect their historic aesthetic.

The impressive scope of work they offer includes Steamfitting, Sheet Metal, Plumbing, and Medical Gasses. Their fleet of service vans and welding trucks provide 24/7 emergency service and preventative maintenance. Prairie Mechanical Corporation invests in their staff by keeping them up to date on the latest innovations through educational opportunities. This is a business that continues to thrive to which they credit the valued and trusting relationships they've built with their clients.

If you want to learn more about this rightfully proud enterprise, take a few moments to view an enlightening 3-minute video on their website at [prairiemech.com](http://prairiemech.com). Guaranteed, you'll be impressed.

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----- 2019 MARDI GRAS in FLORENCE -----

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Women of Faith, Making a Difference





# Spooky Scary Creepy Crawly



Yikes! aren't they the Witches of the "LOVE YO PUP" booth?

Where's the ketchup and mustard?

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Dick Brown bringing in the SWAT team!



eeek...  
Zombies!



Who are all these peeps?

Where're the hotdogs?



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## Worship Times in the Community

**TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA**  
6340 N. 30th St. | 402-453-4080 | [Trinitynorthomaha.org](http://Trinitynorthomaha.org)  
Traditional Sunday Service: 8:45 a.m.  
Sunday School for All: 9:45 a.m. | Praise Service: 10:45 a.m.  
Rev. John Gathje

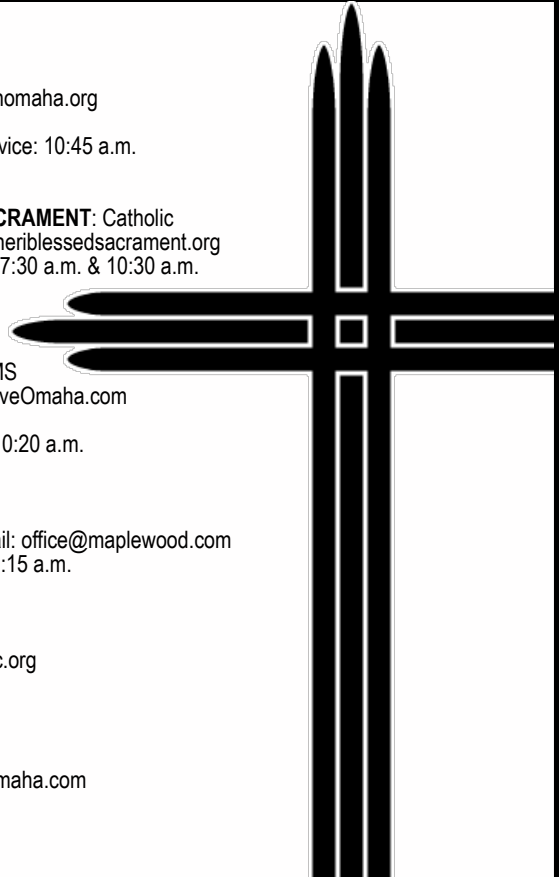
**ST. PHILIP NERI CHURCH - BLESSED SACRAMENT: Catholic**  
8200 N. 30th St. | 402-455-1289 | [saintphilipneriblessedsacrament.org](http://saintphilipneriblessedsacrament.org)  
Saturday Service: 5 p.m. | Sunday Services: 7:30 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.  
Father D. Mario Rapose

**MOUNT OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH: LCMS**  
7301 N. 28th Ave. | 402-455-8700 | [MountOliveOmaha.com](http://MountOliveOmaha.com)  
(Two blocks east of Godfather's Pizza)  
Sunday Service: 9 a.m. | Educational Hour: 10:20 a.m.  
Rev. Roland A. Jank, Jr.

**MAPLEWOOD UNITED METHODIST**  
3535 Maplewood Blvd. | 402-572-1430 | email: [office@maplewood.com](mailto:office@maplewood.com)  
Sunday School: 9 a.m. | Sunday Worship: 10:15 a.m.  
Rev. Jim Johnson

**FLORENCE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
8314 N. 31st St. | 402-455-8343 | [Florencepc.org](http://Florencepc.org)  
Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m.  
Pastor Al Zimmerman

**ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH: LCMS**  
11120 Calhoun Rd. | 402-451-2441 | [stjohnomaha.com](http://stjohnomaha.com)  
Sunday Worship: 9 a.m.  
Rev. Ronald Holling





# TO THE ICONIC ROSEMARY ALLEN

State St  
8400 N

Rosemary Allen Dr

by Linda Quistad & Friends

Rosemary Allen joined the Florentine Players in the mid-1960s after observing a group of fun-loving individuals constructing and decorating a Florence Days Parade float in her North Ridge Drive neighborhood.

Rosemary, known for never missing a good time, volunteered to help and she's never looked back. That is where one of Florence's most iconic Florentine Players was born!

The Florentine Players group was formed as the fundraising arm of the Florence Historical Foundation by small group of likeminded talents focused on using their creativity to raise funds for maintaining the history of the Florence area by producing Omaha's original melodrama, planning casino night parties and hosting fashion shows.

Rosemary contributed so much of herself to the Florence community initially through the Florentine Players activities where her keen eye for garage sale treasures contributed to the costume and prop accumulation starting with melodrama vintage furniture and costumes to museum quality contributions to the 1856 Bank of Florence museum, the 1886 Florence Fire Barn, the 1888 Depot museum and the Florence toll bridge which once connected Florence to Iowa. She loved the creativity of the Florentine Players and the camaraderie.

Another one of Rosemary's valuable contributions to the Florentine Players was her amazing ability as a makeup artist. One time while Rosemary was performing on stage, a talent agent, Manya Nogg, was out in the audience. After the performance, Manya approached Rosemary because she recognized her stage talent. After discovering that Rosemary the theater's makeup artist, Manya invited Rosemary to join her Hollywood connections. Rosemary was hired to do many local commercials and movie star's makeup such as Jack Klugman (Television's The Odd Couple) who also tried to lure her to Hollywood. She and Klugman are pictured together on the right, above.

For the Annual Florence Historical Bank Open House, Rosemary and her husband George decorated the top floor of the 1856 Florence Bank depicting how the bank manager celebrated Christmas in the 1800's. Her attention to detail and period-correct Christmas decorations 'Wowed' the many visitors who stopped by to see Santa. Her holiday contributions continued as my own co-conspirator in planning the annual Florentine Players Caroling Party. Rosemary also gathered stuffed animals throughout the year for the shut-ins and senior homes, where we've caroled since 1988 - 31 years!

Rosemary and her husband George's loyalty and dedication to raising money for the Historical Foundation continued when, as the manager of Florence City Hall, I asked them to be the hall's bartenders, giving her an audience to share her wonderful stories of the Florence community and

its history with anyone who 'bellied up to the bar!'

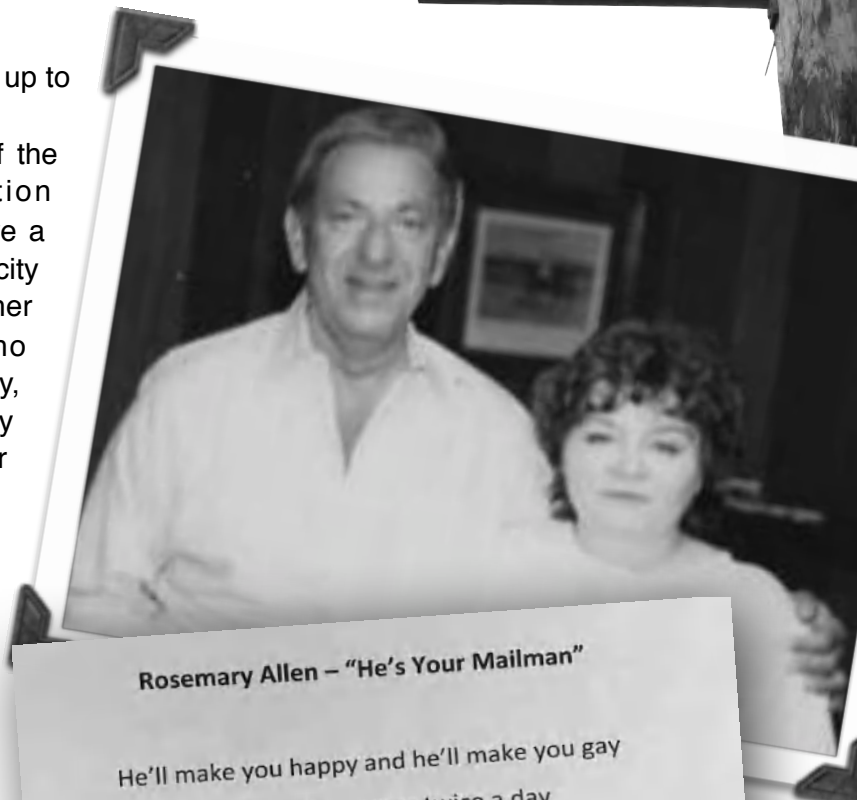
There is not a corner of any of the Florence Historical Foundation holdings that Rosemary didn't have a hand in creating, from the authenticity the museums hold today, to her kindness towards anyone who touched her life. I believe, literally, her fingerprints are on almost every square inch of our museums, our hearts and souls. I am sure there are many more individuals in this community that can share a story of her thoughtfulness and kindness throughout their relationship with this wonderful selfless lady.

Rosemary's community service did not go unnoticed by the City of Omaha as they renamed the stretch of North Ridge Drive in front of her home 'Rosemary Allen Drive' in January 1990!

Paul Bogard, past president of the Florence Historical Foundation for more than 50 years commented, "Rosemary was a true Florentine Player." We lost a treasure who gave her heart and soul to the arts, The Florence Historical

Foundation and the Florentine Players. Her type of passion and devotion is rare and she will be missed!

*Contributors: Linda Dugan (Daughter), Paul Bogard, Myrta Hauger, John Lemen and my memories of a GREAT woman!*



**Rosemary Allen – "He's Your Mailman"**

He'll make you happy and he'll make you gay  
That's cuz he comes twice a day  
He's Your mailman !  
He'll pull your knocker and he'll ring your bell  
Gee I bet you think he's swell  
He's your mailman !  
Now he can come in any kind of weather  
That's because his bag is made of leather  
He doesn't need keys, he doesn't need locks  
He just slips it in your box  
He's your...Mail Man !

R.I.P.  
**ROSEMARY ALLEN**  
Born: October 29, 1936  
Passed February 1, 2019





before earning their current reputation as a respected community institution. It wasn't long ago that the Florentine Players didn't even have

Players have become as close as the families for which they perform.

It's almost like a theatre dynasty: many of the members currently performing, designing sets, creating costumes and writing scripts in

The Florentine Players are a reflection of the families you'll find in Florence—no matter the ups, downs or crazy shenanigans they face, they work together to ensure the old theatre adage rings true: "The show must go on!" But they

## "Everything we do is for our community—without their support, we wouldn't exist."

a home to practice and stage performances.

"Everything we do is for our community," explained Cecelia Sass, Florentine Players board member, "without their support, we wouldn't exist."

In the early 90s, the group of families who co-owned the community center where the Players performed couldn't afford to keep it open. The Players moved to St. Philip Neri's parish basement for about a decade before the Florence Historical Foundation purchased the Christianson Well Company property at 29th and State Streets—it has since been renamed Florence City Hall.

The tight-knit troupe refused to let obstacles deter them from providing family-friendly entertainment for their neighbors. Instead, they worked together to bring their vision to life on stage for every performance and, more than 50 years later, they continue to create memories Florence families will remember forever. In the process, the Florentine

the group are the sons and daughters of past members. In turn, their own children often take up the yoke once they're old enough to remember lines. It's not uncommon to see multiple generations of the same family performing together.

Often, Players brought their children to rehearsals where they would play and grow up together. "Small children were regular attendees. They sat in a group together on the floor watching their parents perform," recalled Laura Hayden, a former board member for both the Florentine

can't do so without the assistance of a stellar surrounding community.

"We are nothing without our community and the support of our parent organization, Florence Historical Foundation," said Derek Kowal, the current president of the Florentine Players who has been with the group for 14 years. "So often you find that people don't care about their community anymore. The Florence neighborhood is unique because everyone pitches in where they need to."

"The second show I ever did with the Players, my son was just born," said Derek Kowal, Florentine Players President. "So, I wore him for all the rehearsals. He spent his first month of life onstage listening to me sing and dance."

Aside from providing entertainment value and fostering community-building, the group serves another mission—highlighting the unique merit of North Omaha history. "The last two melodramas had historic roots. Last year we

(Florentine Players continued on page 9)



Unidentified members of The Florentine Players make do with a limited set in the parish basement at St. Philip Neri.

Players and the Florence Historical Foundation. "When we added floor [microphones], we had to create a new area behind a tape line, so they [the microphones] didn't pick their voices up."

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or  
**CHARLIE and the  
BARLEY BEER  
FACTORY**

MAY 2<sup>ND</sup> - 11<sup>TH</sup>, 9<sup>TH</sup> - 11<sup>TH</sup> @ 7:00 PM  
Florence City Hall,  
2864 State St.  
Tickets \$10,  
Call 531-600-8634  
florencetheater.org



focused on the Trans-Mississippi Expo which was hosted in North Omaha in 1898, and the year before we based a show off on Omaha's only shipwreck, the Bertrand," Derek said. "Nobody died. They just got their ankles dirty."



The cast of "The Bridge Over the River Mo" circa 1977. L-R: Kathy Brutto, Myrta Hauger and Jeff Frolio, Carleen Hunt, Carol Hodges and Dan Pederson, Reva Aguilar, Joyce Pederson and Charlie Hauger, and LaVern Mertz

The Florentine Players may appreciate their neighborhood support, but it's important to note they give as much as they get when it comes to facilitating community growth and opportunities. The group's Trunk-or-Treat event provides a safe space for children and families to collect some candy around Halloween. Both it and the Breakfast with Santa event are free to attend. The Players also support a junior version of the program—The Florenteenies—where North Omaha kids get the chance to take to the stage for their own production.

Riley Cullen is a copywriter at Firespring—Nebraska's first certified B corporation—and grew up in Florence across the street from the BP gas station on 30th and Martin Avenue (back when it was an Amoco). When she's not writing, you can find her savoring a craft beer or playing with her beloved dog, Tonks. Photos provided with care by John Lemen, longtime friend of the Florentine Players.

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**KIWANIS CLUB OF FLORENCE  
WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS**

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- K-Kids Sponsor for Ponca Hills Elementary School
- Annual Florence Days Partner
- B.U.G. (Bring Up Grades) Award Partner
- Florence Historical Foundation Partner
- Host for New Citizens at Monthly Naturalization Ceremonies
- And more!

**Weekly Meetings NEW LOCATION**

7 a.m. every Wednesday

MORMON TRAIL CENTER | 3215 State St

Stop by or email us for more information: [FlorenceKiwanis@cox.net](mailto:FlorenceKiwanis@cox.net)



**AARP GREAT AARP PROGRAMS IN FLORENCE**

While celebrating Mardi Gras in Florence on May 11, throughout the rest of the year the Florence Chapter of AARP offers a chance to enjoy good friendships, a good meal together and lots of humor. For dinner reservations, call Gerry Goldsborough 402-571-0971

Many featured programs address issues of concern to seniors (persons over 50) while others include events for pure entertainment.

Meetings are always open to all.  
**Dinner at Noon, program at 12:45**

Join us upstairs at Mountview Presbyterian Church  
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**2019 FLORENCE AARP PROGRAMS**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| May 20: Brie Alsbury<br>DO Space: Cyber Seniors           | Annual Picnic   |
| June 17: Larry Dwyer<br>Standing Bear                     | October 21: Susan Mitchell<br>Amnesty International               |
| July 15: Shelby Janke<br>NE League of Conservation Voters | November 18: Michael Davis<br>The USS Navy Ship <i>Amber Reed</i> |
| August 19<br>Tri-Faith Initiative                         | December 16:<br>Christmas Music                                   |
| September 16  |   |



# 59th Annual Florence Days Parade

GRAND MARSHAL: MATT MASON Nebraska State Poet

1pm PARADE  
Saturday  
May 11

## MARDI GRAS

in florence



### MARDI GRAS in FLORENCE PARADE DAY

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Free Hot Dogs & Drinks 11AM-1PM  
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UNIVERSAL COLLEGE of HEALING ARTS  
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9102 N 30th St  
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Donuts & Poetry by Matt Mason  
Celebrating a son of Florence & the honor  
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OPEN HOUSE 1-5PM  
DURING & AFTER PARADE  
MAY/JUNE ARTLOFT EXHIBIT  
Ruins & Ruminations Photos  
by Linda Meigs

FARMERS MARKET SUNDAYS  
10AM-3PM starting June 2  
More info on page 15.

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8404 N 30th St

BEARD CONTEST  
Registration at 11PM  
Contest at NOON  
At the mini park - 30th & Willit  
More info on page 14

### NEW FRONTIER BAR

8516 N 30th St  
OPEN 10AM PARADE DAY  
SWAMP BOYS BLUES 3PM  
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### MUSEUMS OPEN

Bank of Florence | 8502 N. 30th St.  
Florence Depot | 9000 N. 30th St.  
Open 11am to 3pm  
Saturday, May 11, 2019

**Mormon Trail  
Center & Museum**  
34th & State Streets  
FREE TOURS: 9am to 9pm  
Saturday, May 11, 2019

**Kids Corner**  
30th & State Streets  
**BALLOONS!**  
Saturday, May 11, 2019  
SPONSORED BY THE FLORENTINE PLAYERS

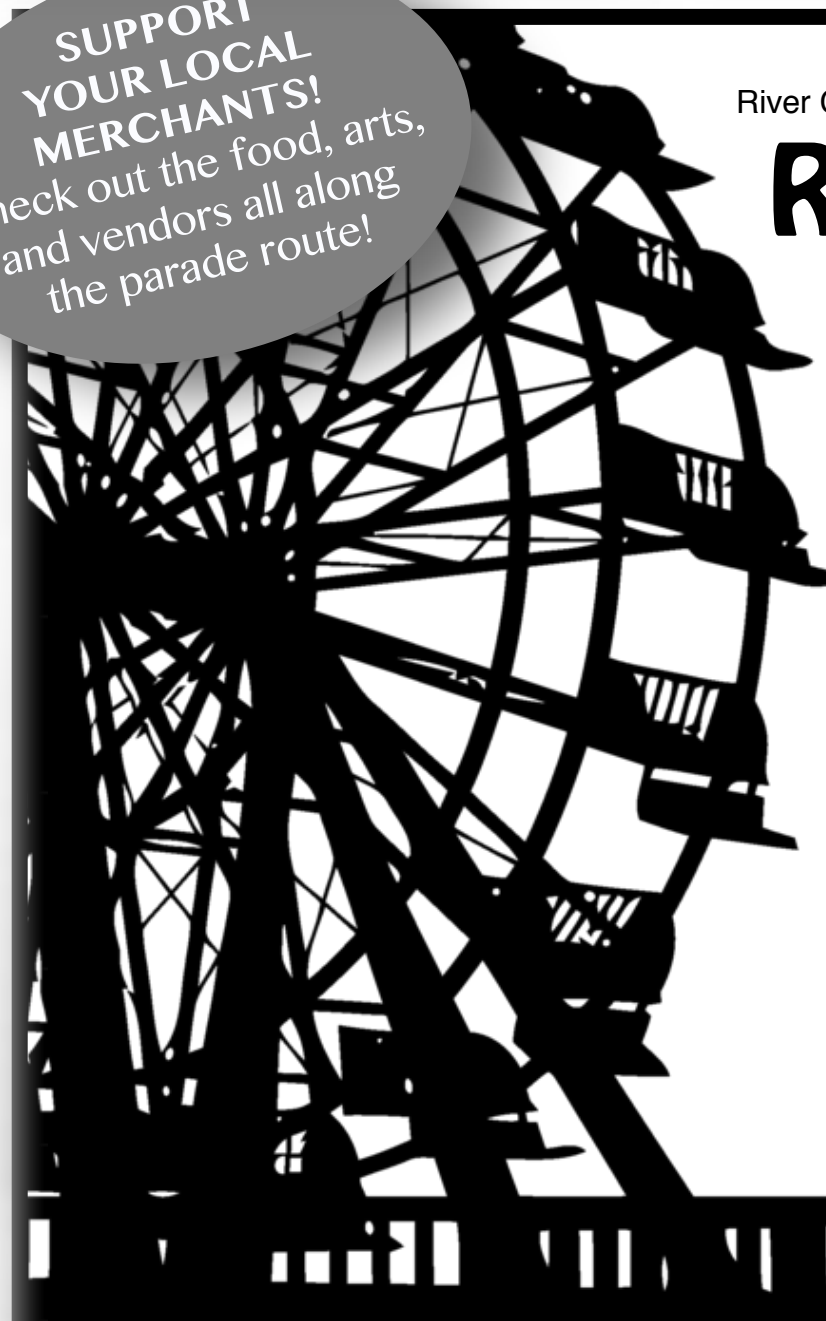
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the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Melodrama  
**COME ON, EILEEN!**

or  
**CHARLIE and the  
BARLEY BEER  
FACTORY**

MAY 2<sup>ND</sup> - 4<sup>TH</sup>, 9<sup>TH</sup> - 11<sup>TH</sup> @ 7:00PM  
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MARDI GRAS in FLORENCE FAIR  
Sponsored by North Bowl

Parade begins at Miller Park (30th & Redick) & proceeds north to McKinley





**DO YOU HAVE MEETINGS?**

We have a meeting once a month. The meetings are held the second Monday of every month; the meetings start at 6:30 PM and last about an hour.

**WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING?**

Just bring yourself ! Bring your concerns, your fears, your strengths, your ideas, and your friends and neighbors. What we really need is a small investment

of your time and a willingness to make a positive difference in your community.

**WHERE DOES FUNDING COME FROM?**

Some funding comes from government sponsored grants. Throughout the rest of the year, we'll also conduct fund-raising events that will enable us to purchase equipment such as two-way radios, police scanners and magnetic signs for vehicles.

For meeting location & times email [FLORENCEOCCP@GMAIL.COM](mailto:FLORENCEOCCP@GMAIL.COM)

Get started now by shooting an email to us at [FLORENCEOCCP@GMAIL.COM](mailto:FLORENCEOCCP@GMAIL.COM)

Training is not complicated. First, you'll ride along with a trained Citizen's Patrol member on three different shifts. Once you complete the ride-alongs, you'll register to attend a 1-evening Omaha Citizen's Patrol Training Class at OPD's Northwest Precinct, near 102nd & Fort Streets. After your successful completion of the course you'll receive an official Citizen's Patrol ID badge.



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and gaining awareness and information Different seeds will be available at about gardening and seed saving. different times due to seasonal changes

Omaha Public Library cardholders of all ages and levels of agricultural expertise are invited to use the Common Soil Seed Library. Search for seeds in person at Benson Branch, Bess Johnson Elkhorn Branch, Millard Branch and South Omaha Library, or in the online catalog at omahalibrary.org.

Cardholders may check out up to 10 seed packets at a time. Seeds do not need to be returned, so there are no due dates and patrons do not accrue penalties or overdue fees for unreturned seeds.

Reserve seeds through the catalog and pick them up at your most convenient location when you're notified that they are ready. Check the catalog (type in "Seed Library") to see a complete list of *The Common Soil Seed Library is supported through grant funds provided by the Special Donor-Advised Fund of the Jewish Federation of Omaha Foundation.*



# SEVENTY FIVE NORTH

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Exciting stuff happening in our community. Seventy Five North Revitalization Corp. was founded in 2011 with one purpose: to facilitate the revitalization of a healthy, sustainable, mixed-income community in North Omaha's Highlander neighborhood. For more info visit [seventyfivenorth.org](http://seventyfivenorth.org)

Neighborhood programming ranges from coding camps for high school students to interactive jazz classes for toddlers

*never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*  
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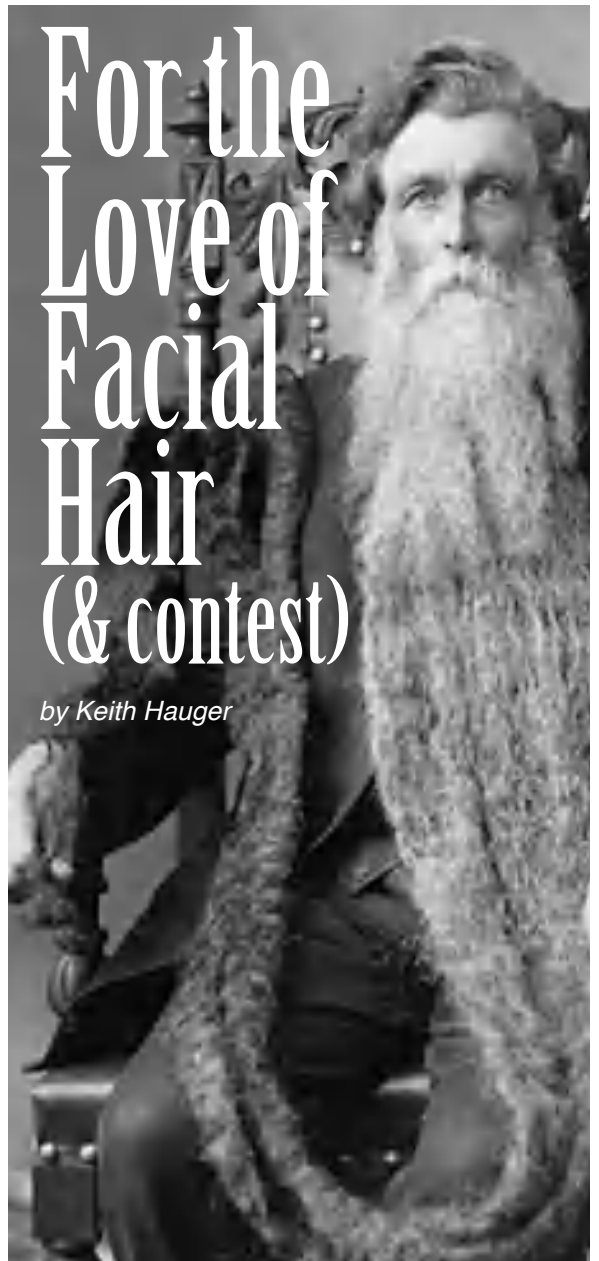
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# For the Love of Facial Hair (& contest)

by Keith Hauger

**Third Annual Beard Contest**  
Registration 11am  
Contest at Noon  
May 11 PARADE DAY

Last year's contest was a great success, so we're doing it again this year. If you or someone you know has a beard or moustache of any kind come and join us!

**FOUR CATEGORIES:** Full beard under 8 inches, Full beard over 8 inches, Moustache and Partial beard. So, join us before the parade on Saturday, May 11, next to the Historic Bank of Florence Museum (N. 30th & Willit Streets).

All participants eligible to win great prizes.

Thanks to organizers Keith Hauger and Omaha Facial Hair Society and sponsors Blue Bottle Beard and Monster Engraving.

**LAST YEAR'S WINNERS BELOW, L-R:** Justin Block, Mark Beneda, Don't Know and Clair Jones



**MINNE♦LUSA**  
HISTORIC DISTRICT

**MILLER PARK MINNE LUSA NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**

We meet the first Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. \* at Miller Park Pavilion.  
[millerparkminnelusa.com](http://millerparkminnelusa.com)

\* Citizen Patrol Meeting at 6:30 p.m.



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# May & June Events at the Florence Mill

**May/June ArtLoft Exhibit "Ruins & Ruminations"**  
Photos by Linda Meigs

**May 11, 3:30pm "Donuts & Poetry by State Poet Matt Mason"**  
Celebrating a son of Florence and his literary accomplishments.

**May 30, 6 pm "History Happy-Hour at the Mill"** teams up with the Washington County Historical Society to host Nebraska State Historical Society Archeologist Rob Bozell discussing the significance of Engineer Cantonment. Followed by a field-trip to the site north of the Mormon Bridge.

**Sunday, June 2, 10am-3pm First Farmers Market of 2019**  
Head to the Florence Mill every Sunday thru the end of Sept for a lively country market: Farm-fresh Produce, Crafts, Live Music, Massage, BBQ Truck, Educational Guests, Animals & (free!) Last-Sunday Pony Rides, artsy-table & monster bubbles.

**June TBA/Saturday "Grandma's Stash: Dry-Goods Market"**  
Pop-up Market of textiles, vintage fabrics, quilts and other assorted dry-goods. Browse the unexpected. (Call to be a vendor).

**Stay-Tuned for additional summer events until October 5 & 6 North Hills Pottery Tour:** The Grand Finale of the Mill's 2019 season before Winter hibernation, the Mill is filled with ceramic artists and their clay creations.

## The Florence Mill

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9102 N.30th (next to I-680 exit 13) Phone: 402-551-1233

Museum & ArtLoft: Open Wednesdays thru Saturdays 1-5pm

Farmers Market Sundays: 10am-3pm, June 2 thru Sept 29



MINNE♦LUSA

HISTORIC DISTRICT

MILLER PARK  
MINNE LUSA  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
ASSOCIATION

We meet the first Thursday of every month at 7 p.m.\* at Miller Park Pavilion.

[millerparkminnelusa.com](http://millerparkminnelusa.com)

\* Citizen Patrol Meeting at 6:30 p.m.

**Florence Mill Farmers Market**  
Sundays: June thru Sept



from 10 am to 3 pm

\* Starts June 2 \*

Fresh Local Produce, Crafts, Music, "Country School" Critters, Massage, BBQ, Family-friendly  
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# Did you know?

**Agricultural Historic Site**  
The Florence Mill remains as a unique agricultural building linking the Pioneer Trails with territorial settlement. It originated as the Winter Quarters ginsmill, built under the supervision of Brigham Young. After the Mormons abandoned Winter Quarters in 1848 the mill was rebuilt by a Gold-Rusher who never made it out of Nebraska. The Florence Mill provided agricultural support for the town of Florence in Nebraska Territory. The Florence Mill remains today because it evolved to fit the times and changing agricultural needs of farmers from the Civil War to the Cold War. It now contains a museum on the main floor and an art gallery on the second floor loft.

## HISTORIC FLORENCE

FlorenceTheater.org  
FlorenceDays.org  
HistoricFlorence.org  
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# Mardi Gras in Florence



Congrats to our 2019  
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State Senator  
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GOT A BEARD?  
JOIN THE  
BEARD  
CONTEST  
ON  
PARADE DAY  
DETAILS  
PAGE 14

**MARDI GRAS**  
in florence





# Miller Park Minne Lusa



**THE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION** New members always welcome, so please join us! Your "membership" gives you voting privileges on issues and a monthly meeting reminders. For 50 years -- since 1969 -- our organization has been serving the Miller Park Minne Lusa area. Drop by the first Thursday of the month at the pavilion in Miller Park (East side of 30th St between Redick and Kansas). Meetings begin at 7 p.m., last about an hour and are followed by refreshments and fellowship. Annual dues are \$10 for an individual and \$15 for your entire family.

**THE CITIZEN PATROL** Miller Park Minne Lusa Citizen Patrol meetings start at 6:30 p.m. right before the Neighborhood Association meeting. We are always looking for new members, so please come early and join us for both meetings!

**GOT QUESTIONS?** Visit millerparkminnelusa.com (where you can also sign up for email notices) or call 402-212-7035 or write Miller Park Minne Lusa Neighborhood Association, P.O.Box 12504, Omaha, NE 68112.

# MARDI GRAS

in florence



Mardi Gras in Florence!

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Florence Historical Foundation continues to restore and maintain many historical buildings in Florence. Florence City "Reception" Hall is the original site of Florence's City Hall, jail and fire station back in the 1880s. The Florentine Players continue to be a part of the fundraising arm of the Florence Historical Foundation. The facility was built by your donations and is truly a "community building". We take pride in what we've built and hope you do, too, when using the Florence City "Reception" Halls.

Plan your events at [FlorenceReceptionHalls.com](http://FlorenceReceptionHalls.com)

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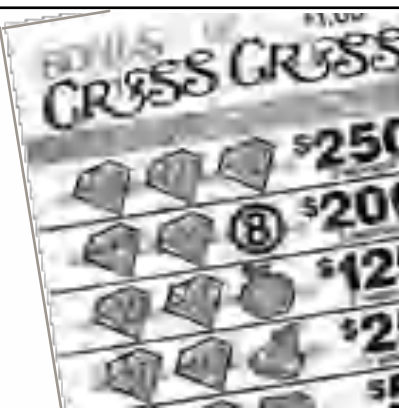
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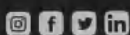
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# Melissa

SHARING THE SPIRIT OF OUR FRIEND

by Sandy Lemen

Anyone who knew Melissa Hizer knows she was a full-of-life fighter respected school teacher, loving mother, devoted wife and generous friend, even in the face of a terminal illness. Those of you who don't personally know Melissa will likely find inspiration in knowing about her.

Born on February 13, 1974, the 44-year-old beauty entered into heavenly rest this past January 25 after a 3-year bout with cancer.

While on this earth, Melissa was always an ambitious and active woman. In high school, she participated with the school band and Color Guard and eventually went on to perform as a member of the UNO Color Guard and Maverettes Dance Team.

Later, Melissa spent several years performing with and serving on the board for The Florentine Players. She used her dancing skills in The Florentine Players' annual melodramas as a can-can dancer and wowed audiences with her perfect high kicks. She met and married her soul mate, Jeff Hizer in the late 90's and went on to have two incredible daughters, Peyton (2005) and Mackinlee (2009).

Melissa also weaved fun and laughter into the lives around her. As a Papillion LaVista school teacher, she was adored by her students and peers. She made learning fun and often pulled pranks on her fellow teachers to keep them laughing.

When she was diagnosed in 2016 with terminal cancer, Melissa made it her mission to educate on prevention and awareness. She openly shared her journey online with regular CaringBridge journal entries and she ALWAYS started with the "positives" in her life. As a natural born teacher, Melissa taught me, and I'm sure others, how to focus on the good — no matter the depth of the "bad." While play and laughter may not cure -- it truly is the very best medicine.

Little wonder that Melissa's mom called her "Sunshine." She lit up a room with her joyful presence (talking about her mischievous pranks was a recurring theme at her funeral service)! She was a true warrior who will be deeply missed. We love you Melissa, who gave so much to Florence. Thank you for the gift of you.



Florence Historical Foundation continues to restore and maintain many historical buildings in Florence. Florence City "Reception" Hall is the original site of Florence's City Hall, jail and fire station back in the 1880s. The Florentine Players continue to be a part of the fundraising arm of the Florence Historical Foundation. The facility was built by your donations and is truly a "community building". We take pride in what we've built and we hope you do, too, when using the Florence City "Reception" Halls.



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