



The Stoughton  
**Courier Hub**

Thursday, January 29, 2015 • Vol. 133, No. 27 • Stoughton, WI • ConnectStoughton.com • \$1



Photo by Mark Ignatowski

Linda Kunz was selected as the Citizen of the Year by the Stoughton Courier Hub. Kunz volunteers countless hours as a musician, including work with the Stoughton Village Players and as an accompanist for solo and ensemble performances by students.

# In tune with the community

## Musician Kunz named Hub's Citizen of the Year

**MARK IGNATOWSKI**  
*Unified Newspaper Group*

If each of the 88 keys on a piano were some type of community musical outlet, it seems Linda Kunz would have hit all the notes.

Kunz, a Stoughton resident since 1981, has volunteered for more than 20 years as an accompanist for students in the school district music programs, started the Stoughton Festival Choir and led countless community-based musical programs.

That's a big part of the reason the Stoughton Courier Hub selected her as this year's Citizen of the Year. The annual award recognizes people who make important contributions to the community.

And while Kunz might not be a household name, she managed to inspire several people representing a variety of nonprofit interests to advocate for her selection – an important factor in our selection process. The Hub heard from a past student, church

**'I've played in just about every church. I've played at every school.'**

*Linda Kunz  
Stoughton Courier Hub  
Citizen of the Year*

and community music program directors and a local theater group all urging support for Kunz's recognition.

Indeed, along with her wide-ranging influence, it's hard to find a place in the community where Kunz hasn't donated her musical talents.

"I've played in just about every church," Kunz said. "I've played at every school."

While much of her musical experience comes as a keyboardist, Kunz also leads choirs, sings hymns and works with the Stoughton Village Players on musical performances.

And her own drive to be

involved with so many different aspects of the music community in Stoughton has led her to get others involved. She's drawn to the task of "finding people that have an interest, and maybe don't really have an outlet," she said. She spent her first few years in Stoughton looking for her own outlet, substituting as a musician at different churches.

Now she takes people under her wing.

"Let's get you plugged in here or there and we'll get you involved somewhere," Kunz said.

### Music in schools

Of all the musical events she's been part of, Kunz said working with students as part of their solo and ensemble performances is one of the most rewarding.

For more than two decades, Kunz has offered her talent as an accompanist to students in Stoughton, and more recently, McFarland.

Turn to **Kunz/Page 7**

### Citizen of the Year winners

The annual award recognizes someone whose presence in Stoughton made a noticeable and positive impact on the quality of life in the community during the calendar year.

- 2014:** Linda Kunz
- 2013:** Cecelia Juve
- 2012:** Peggy Kiss
- 2011:** Dick and Dianne Anderson
- 2010:** Sonny Swangstu and Kendall McBroom
- 2009:** Kathy Thode
- 2008:** Mary Onsager
- 2007:** John Jaglowski
- 2006:** Genevieve Wilberg
- 2005:** Norval Morgan
- 2004:** Tony Hill
- 2003:** Millie Gardner
- 2002:** Odean Teigen
- 2001:** Darlene Arneson
- 2000:** David Handt

### If you go

**What:** Norse Afternoon of Fun  
**When:** 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 8  
**Where:** Stoughton High School gymnasium, 600 Lincoln Ave.  
**Cost:** adults - \$6; kids under 14 - \$1  
**Info:** stoughtonnorwegiandancers.net

# Dancers highlight Destination Weekend

## Norse Afternoon of Fun Feb. 8

**MARK IGNATOWSKI**  
*Unified Newspaper Group*

Another day of Scandinavian entertainment is coming up in February.

The annual Norse Afternoon of Fun will be held at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 8, in the Stoughton High School gymnasium. The afternoon features the high school's Norwegian Dancers, as well as drawings for prizes, several awards and the presentation of the Syttende Mai king and queen.

The Sunday event is the culmination of another "Destination Stoughton" weekend held by the Norwegian Summit group in an effort to draw visitors to Stoughton.

### Norse afternoon

The annual performance is billed as a Norwegian, family-friendly event that

Turn to **Norse Afternoon/Page 5**



Photo submitted

The Norse Afternoon of Fun will be held at the Stoughton High School gymnasium, featuring the Stoughton Norwegian Dancers at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 8. Asher McMullin is shown at last year's event.



**Courier Hub**

**Unified Newspaper Group** Publications

## Kunz: Musician has worked with students, churches and community groups

Continued from page 1

"I really like working with kids – especially the ones that are a little bit serious about it," Kunz said.

Working together with the students is a different task than just learning the notes, she said. Having the kids learn to work with the accompanying music is a great way for them to understand how the piece is supposed to sound beyond just hitting the right notes at the right time.

"It's a collaboration," Kunz said. "I love watching a kid get the notes and then start to understand the music."

Former Stoughton High School choral director John Beutel described Kunz as "a human dynamo" who helped accompany hundreds of students at the festival.

"Perhaps the most important aspect of all of this is the energy of her participation and the commitment to serving others as a part of her everyday life," added Beutel, who led the effort to get Kunz nominated for Citizen of the Year.

Kunz said music has been part of her everyday life since she was a little girl.

She started out on piano in kindergarten, eventually learning to play organ through her piano teacher who happened to be a church organist, as well.

"By the time I was in eighth grade, I was playing for Sunday schools," Kunz said. "Soon out of high school, I was playing for worship services."

She eventually started teaching piano lessons, but

wanted to maintain that feeling of having to learn something new, just like her piano students were doing. So, she started learning cello.

"When I was teaching piano, I found it was very, very helpful for me to be learning something because you would get this look from a student where they're like, 'I know you don't get it,'" she said. "If I was experiencing that difficult learning, beginning stages, I could recognize and empathize with that look."

### Music in the community

Kunz has also played a role in bringing music to the community beyond the school walls.

She helped start the Stoughton Festival Choir about 20 years ago as a way for people to share their musical talents.

"Linda is the force that keeps the festival choir going," Beutel said. "For all practical purposes, Linda now is the Stoughton Festival Choir. It quite simply wouldn't exist without her."

In addition to the community choir, Kunz spent about 12 years working as the music director at the Methodist Church, then at Christ Lutheran Church after it was rebuilt following the 2005 fire.

She started mostly as a substitute and temporary organist in order to get her foot in the door.

"There's always a need for organists, I've learned," Kunz said with a chuckle. "There never seem to be enough of them."



Photo by Mark Ignatowski

Linda Kunz was selected as the Citizen of the Year by the Stoughton Courier Hub. Kunz has played as an organist and pianist at several local churches.

Kunz has led hymn sing-alongs for residents at Skaalen Home, Nazareth House and the Madison Area Rehabilitation Center in Stoughton for close to 25 years. She started out by playing music at the worship services at Skaalen and was asked to lead sings by the activities director. Word got out, and other facilities asked her to do the same.

In the past decade, she's become more involved with the Stoughton Village Players theater group. Kunz started as a piano sub for rehearsals, but has grown to play at shows and direct the pit orchestra.

"It's a wonderful bunch of people to work with," Kunz said. "The social aspect is very important to the theater. Some of those friendships are bigger than the theater."

### Different keyboards

Even Kunz's day job is about community and giving back.

She's worked as an administrative assistant at the

Nurses Christian Fellowship at Intervarsity Christian Fellowship in Madison for about 33 years. Her job includes maintaining the group's website, a task she took on 20 years ago at a time when mainstream Internet usage was just starting to pick up.

"The main office had built us, back in 1995, one static web page," Kunz said.

Her office was told someone would have to maintain and update the page, and she was "elected" with no knowledge of how to do it.

"I went and bought 'HTML for Dummies' and the rest is sort of history," she said. "I pretty much taught myself."

She doesn't build a lot of fancy sites, but works with several small organizations to maintain their web presence. She handles online updates and ticketing for the Stoughton Village Players.

"I can start with a blank page and end up with a web site," Kunz said.

Since moving here in the

## What others have to say

"Linda Kunz is a human dynamo. There is hardly a part of our community that she has not touched."  
– John Beutel, former SHS choral director

"What (gifts) her warm presence and talented expertise were to us as developing musicians. The Stoughton Community is lucky to have her as a person who makes a difference in the lives of so many people."  
– Kristin Burns, SHS graduate, 1994

"Each year, (Relay for Life) participants comment on the beauty of the music and I believe it is made more beautiful by the act of the volunteer coordination: in large part, Linda's connections."  
– Amy Ketterer, Relay For Life chair

"People like Linda Kunz are a rarity. Of all the times I observed Linda working with students, I never saw her get frustrated, upset or lose her patience with them. Linda Kunz has done so much for the students and community of Stoughton."  
– Michelle A. Kaebisch, director of education and community engagement, Madison Symphony Orchestra

"Linda has made a positive difference in our community in a selfless and giving way. Her contributions are many, but are sometimes behind the scenes as she never does it to bring attention to herself. Linda is an extremely energetic contributor to cultural events in Stoughton."  
– Brooke Hauser, president, Stoughton Village Players

1980s, Kunz has steadily been leaving an impact on the Stoughton community.

She's a mother of three, with adult children in Dane and Rock counties. She adopted her two oldest grandkids about 10 years ago, and has other grandchildren in the area.

"My kids are all around – I get to see them and enjoy them," Kunz said. "They have trouble keeping up with my schedule."

Despite the busy schedule, Kunz does enjoy a little free time gardening, sleeping in and reading. But even the

free time involves sight reading through new music and catching live performances in Stoughton and Madison.

"There's not much down time," she said with a laugh.

But by her account, she's doing what she loves.

"When I think about it, as a kid, it was like, 'Well, what I'd like to do is be a secretary like my mom,' because I like administrative stuff and organizing stuff," Kunz said. "And I'd like to be a musician and church organist ... and I've taught piano. I'm doing all of that. It just sort of happened."