

Karen Gilliland

Karen Gilliland was born in Hoxie in 1940. She was the youngest child and had three older brothers. Her brothers always kept her on her toes growing up but she mostly stayed out of trouble. She has great memories of slumber parties, school dances, and being a cheerleader. She also has fond memories of coming into town on Saturday night when Hoxie came alive. She enjoyed going to movies and seeing all her friends on main street. During her young life she dreamed about what her life could be like as an adult.

After graduating from Hoxie high Karen attended Fort Hays state University and planned to be an accountant. She got high marks at Fort Hays and during her time there married her high school sweetheart Darrel.

Eventually they moved back to Hoxie. Karen became a first-grade teacher while also helping her husband open an auto parts store. Karen had two sons and now has four grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Being a mom and grandma has always been a point of pride for Karen. Karen also has a strong Christian faith and is now a member of the Christ Community Church. The thing she is most proud of is touching the lives of so many children as a teacher. She was there is nothing like when a six-year old's eyes light up when they finally realize they are learning to read.

Throughout her life Karen always had big dreams. Dreams of building a strong family. Dreams of a successful business, and dreams of making her community stronger through education.

Karen Gilliland you are a Hoxie hero!

Peggy Eland

Peggy Eland was born in 1960 in Topeka, KS. She had a pleasant childhood growing up in what she called a "Big small town." Her neighborhood was friendly and there were always kids out playing in the yards and parks. She went to high school in Topeka and was a good student who received high marks. Growing up she loved music and played both violin and clarinet. She was an active member of the school band.

After she graduated, she attended KU where she met her future husband, Ken. Eventually they moved to Hoxie at which time Peggy started her career as a teacher. At first the transition was difficult as it is easy to feel like an outsider in a small place like Hoxie. Eventually she found her place and is now proud to be a part of our small-town community. She taught high school English and Journalism for forty years. She says that each year of teaching had challenges but also shining moments. One of her favorite parts of teaching was creating the yearbook in collaboration with the students.

Peggy has two sons and is now loving being a grandmother to her three grandchildren. Being a part of their lives is a highlight of her life now that she is retired. Peggy is a lifelong Christian and has been active in the church her whole life. She has also found joy in quilting. She loves being part of a group of friends with a common interest like quilting. She finds tranquility in the process of creating the quilts. She also enjoys rooting on her favorite sports teams, something she would not have dreamed of doing as a kid.

Peggy has been a huge part of many young people's lives in Hoxie and continues to keep her community strong today.

Peggy Eland, you are a Hoxie hero!

Joanne Emerick

Joanne was born in Ness City, Kansas in 1951. She attended a Catholic grade school and described herself as a “squeaky clean” student. She later attended Ness City High School. Even when she was a kid Joanne was curious about history and the stories of Americans. Her father was a soldier in WW2 and Joanne grew up a patriot who championed democracy and human rights.

Joanne attended Fort Hays State university during the tumultuous time of the Vietnam War. She would see many of her friends go off to war. She was supportive of the troops and began wearing a bracelet with the name of the Soldier “John Hamm” in solidarity with our troops. Joanne’s interest in history, politics, and government lead her to a career teaching history and social studies. She eventually landed here at Hoxie High School where she is remembered by her students as being an engaging teacher who always taught with a hands-on approach.

Joanne often had her students do projects that pushed them outside their comfort zones. National History Day was one major highlight of her classes, and many students made the trek to Washington D.C to showcase award winning history presentations. One special moment came while Joanne and her students were making etchings of the Vietnam wall. As Joanne spoke with her students, she placed her hand on the memorial wall. Without realizing it she placed her hand on the name of James Hamm, the exact person whose name was on her bracelet. This moment seemed to not be a just coincidence but was driven by some higher power.

Joanne was married to Don Emerick and had a son in Hoxie. While juggling being a mother and teacher, she made time to also be a historian. Her father had been in the Pacific theater of WW2 and Joanne began contacting the soldiers who served with her dad and writing their stories. After she retired from a celebrated teaching career, Joanne wrote a book chronicling these stories of American heroes. Joanne has made immense contributions to the lives of both students and war veterans.

Joanne Emerick you are a Hoxie hero!

Bette James

Bette James was born in 1938 and grew up in North Platte, NE. She described life in Nebraska as a “black and white photograph” similar to the book and film To Kill a Mockingbird. She grew up in a neighborhood full of many kids. She had many adventures with her neighbors, even exploring a forbidden haunted house down the street. Bette still remembers the church bells ringing celebrating the end of WW2. She remembers her grade school fondly even though it was a simple one building school. She was busy during High School; She held two jobs while also earning scholarships to Hastings College. She was an English Major and continued to foster her love of language and literature. Bette was the child of teachers. She always loved school and always knew she wanted to be a teacher.

After graduating she took a job teaching English in Hill City, KS. It was in NW Kansas where she met her future husband and decided to start a family. Eventually she moved to Hoxie and began teaching English at HHS. She now has three very successful children and five grandchildren. Bette touched the lives of thousands of kids in her career as an English teacher. Her passion for literature inspired many students to enjoy reading and pursue language arts. She always encouraged students to read in order to expand their horizons and gain knowledge of the wider world.

When asked what advice she would give young people today Bette gave some sage advice. Treat everyone with kindness and compassion. Also don't judge people too quickly as you never know what experiences they have had. If you treat people with kindness, you will make yourself and others better people.

Betty James, you are a Hoxie hero!