

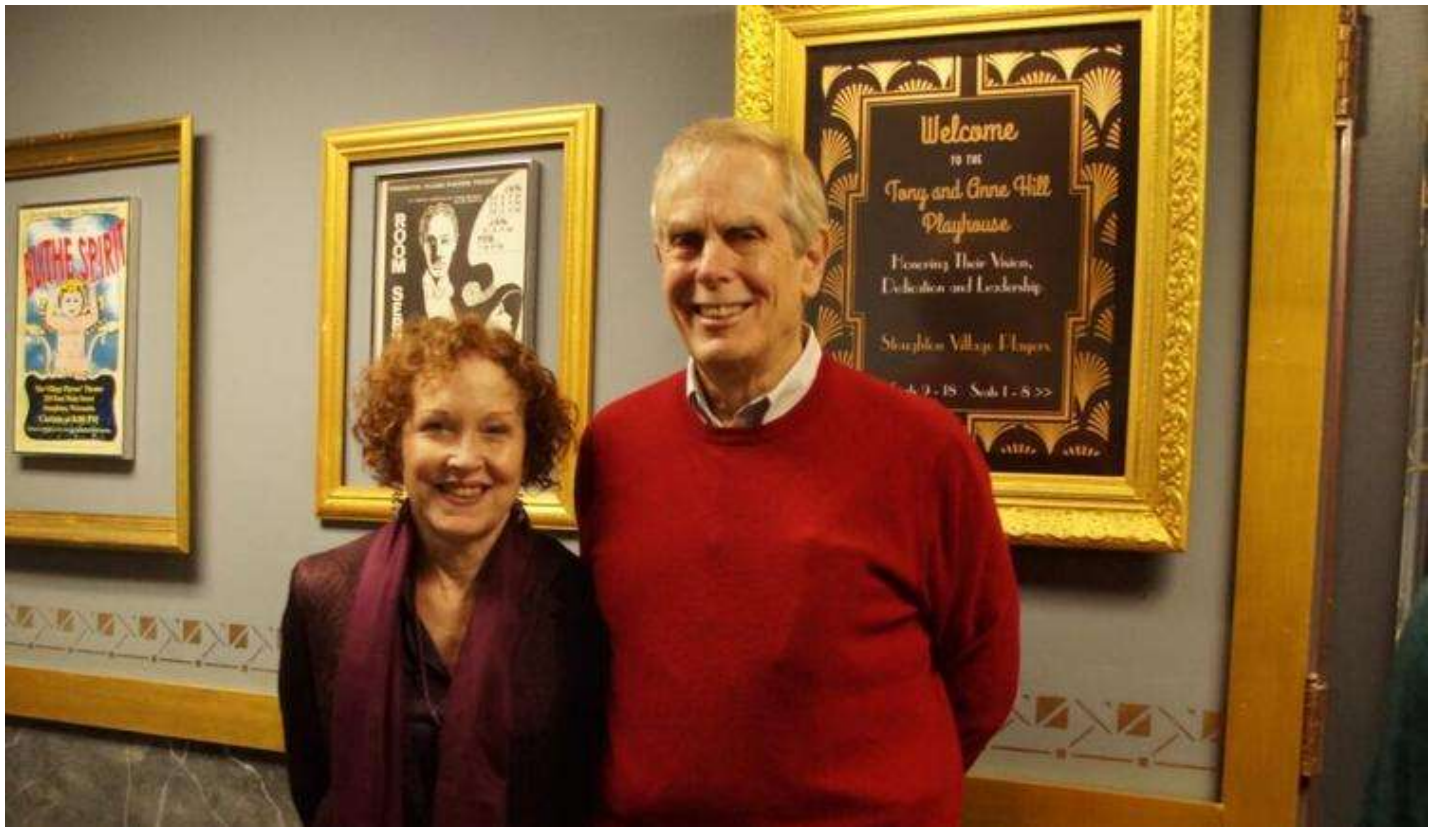
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**NEWS / COMMUNITY**

# Stoughton Village Players renamed auditorium for founders on 50th anniversary

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Anne and Tony Hill, two of the founding members of the Stoughton Village Players Theatre group, stand in front of the art deco-themed sign after the playhouse and auditorium building was officially named for them on Tuesday, Dec. 21.

Photo courtesy Stoughton Village Players

The Stoughton Village Players has dedicated its auditorium to commemorate those who founded the group a half-century ago.

On Tuesday, Dec. 21, the Stoughton Village Players board revealed a designation in the lobby of the playhouse building, at 255 E. Main St., recognizing the efforts of Tony and Anne Hill by renaming the auditorium after the couple. The recognition is meant not only for the Hills' efforts to start the Village Players, but also for their continued work in the last five decades, a news release written by Dan Preuher posted on the Village Players' website states.

“The Board could think of no better way to start off this special time than with acknowledging our founders,” the release on the website states. “As Tony said at the unveiling event, there were many that met in MaryLou Fendrick’s kitchen in 1972 with an idea to start a theater group so he wanted to accept the recognition on their behalf.

“He also mentioned that SVP is the sum of many people’s hard work, and he was humbled that he and Anne were singled out,” the post states.

The Village Players were established in the fall of 1972, starting with a dozen people initially gathering at the Fendrick’s house and being helped along with the assistance of professional theater specialists. The group’s first production, “Spoon River Anthology,” was performed in the basement of the old Junior High School in 1973, and its first major production of “A Thurber Carnival” came a year later in 1974, according to history published on the Village Players’ website.

The Hills were a “driving force” for the Village Players, the release states. Tony, who served as the group's president, arranged to have a performing space in the upstairs of the senior center, which at that time was housed in the Our Saviors Lutheran Church, according to the online history. Tony purchased what is now the Village Players’s current building in the 1990’s after the Badger Theatre had vacated it after its founding nearly a century earlier.

The Village Players later bought the theater building outright from the Hill family in 2004 after years of fundraising and work to change the building from a movie theater to one that instead featured a performing stage.

“In an organization of volunteers and teams of people all contributing their time and talents, it is often difficult to pick anyone out of the crowd for special recognition... but this was a no-brainer,” the post reads. “We were lucky to have Tony and Anne there at the beginning and even luckier that they are still here making sure we create, evolve and build for our next 50 years.”



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