

Jeff Around Town – January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Jeff:** And time now for Jeff Around Town. Joining me this morning, Danna Kehm from Hoff Family and Arts Culture Center and Potawatomi Arts Culture and Entertainment. Good morning, Danna.

**Danna:** Good morning. Thank you for having me, Jeff.

**Jeff:** You bet. Right off the bat here, let's just explain to folks who aren't familiar with PACE and Hoff what those two things mean. And you had explained it very well, referring to Omaha Performing Arts.

**Danna:** Sure. Absolutely. So, a lot of people sometimes get this confused. Potawatomi Arts Culture and Entertainment is the organization, similar to like what people know as Omaha Performing Arts, whereas the Hoff Family Arts and Culture Center is the building where all the wonderful activities happen, like the Holland Center.

**Jeff:** Gotcha. And that building, so it was built like in the 1880s or something like that?

**Danna:** Yeah. 1894. It was an old abandoned warehouse that was used for farm equipment. And really, Council Bluffs was a hub for farm equipment, and they used that building to store farm equipment and get it shipped out across the U.S. So Council Bluffs was second only to Kansas City as far as getting farm equipment out right around the turn of the century.

**Jeff:** And then it went through this massive, massive renovation.

**Danna:** Yeah. So, you know, PACE was actually formed right around 2016. There were several studies that showed, well, more than several studies showed that Council Bluffs and Southwest Iowa were lacking our activities, as well as our organizations in the area were struggling. They were small, they were weak, and they needed support. And so that's where PACE came about, as sort of like a support organization to help some of these arts and culture nonprofits. And our big first initiative was the building of the Hoff Family Arts and Culture Center. So, we took this old abandoned warehouse and put a performing arts center on the site of it. So, it's now 95,000 square feet dedicated to the arts. So, we have everything from a performing arts center, a gallery, teaching kitchen, classrooms, rehearsal spaces. So, as you can imagine, it is just bustling with lots of energy. Part of that is the partners that we have in the building with us. So, Pottawatomie Arts, Culture, and Entertainment. We also have Chanticleer Community Theater, who have been a staple in the region for over 70 years. American Midwest Ballet, Council of Symphony Orchestra, and Kitchen Council.

**Jeff:** It's incredible. And I don't know this to be true, but is there anything else like it in the country, at least not in the Midwest?

**Danna:** You know, we did some research. We obviously were modeled off a few different types of organization. But what really makes us unique is that we combine the performing arts, the visual arts, and the culinary arts. And you know, this is the type of a world-class arts and culture center that you would typically find on the coast. But we have one right here in Council Bluffs.

**Jeff:** And there's like a permanent Grant Wood installation there too.

**Danna:** Yeah, we are very, very fortunate to have permanent Grant Woods. We have two murals, basically. One is the Corn Room murals, as well as we have a mural called Early Days of Keyesville, which is basically the early days of Council Bluffs. So, it's based off of Council Bluffs right about 1857. It's a huge mural painted by Grant Wood and one of his associates. But it shows early Council Bluffs. And those that are familiar with Council Bluffs know the 100 block, and you can actually see some of the buildings in that mural.

**Jeff:** And you grew up in Council Bluffs looking for things like this to do, right?

**Danna:** You know, I grew up singing and dancing, and the arts are near and dear to my heart. Of course, I grew up doing Council Bluffs Children's Theater, which we still do now at the Hoff Center.

**Jeff:** How wonderful.

**Danna:** But one of the things that was missing, and it was shown in those studies, that they were lacking opportunities. So, I grew up having to cross the river, as most kids did, to participate in art activities or go to museums. And so, I remember in third grade, I really wanted to join a choir and my sister wanted to be in a choir. So, we ended up coming over here to UNO for the Nebraska Children's Chorus for choir rehearsals every Saturday morning.

**Jeff:** And now we just want to emphasize that this is for the community, for the entire community. And it's this thing that connects us on both sides of the river. And you have a five-year anniversary coming up very soon.

**Danna:** We do! We're super excited. We actually officially opened the Hoff Family Arts and Culture Center in February of 2020. And now it's the five-year celebration. So, we're super excited to celebrate all the amazing things that are happening in the building. We have over 100,000 people come visit us every year. So, at the end of the month, we're going to do an art plus dish plus a community open house during our Hoff Fourth Friday celebration.

**Jeff:** And people can find out more...

**Danna:** ... at [PaceArtsIowa.org](http://PaceArtsIowa.org) or on our social media.

**Jeff:** Danna, thank you so very much. Jeff Around Town celebrating PACE Hoff Family Arts Center. Hope you can check it out. We've got music now from Haydn.