



Mary Phillips

May 8, 1944 - July 9, 2025

The memorial service celebrating the life of Mary Phillips of Wadena and Battle Lake, will be held at 1:00p.m on Saturday, July 19, at the former First Congregational United Church of Christ building in Wadena, with Pastor Jim Stoneman and Cindy Lemke presiding.

Visitation will be held at the church on Saturday, from 10:30a.m. until the time of the service. Burial will be in Wadena Cemetery, Wadena, MN.

At her favorite place on Lake Blanche in Otter Tail County, MN, Mary, 81, passed away with family by her side on July 9, 2025. Loving care was provided by her family and HIA Hospice (formerly Hospice of the Red River Valley).

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You are invited to watch the service via live-stream by going to the First Congregational United Church of Christ's Facebook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/people/First-Congregational-UCC-of-Wadena/100068659975957/>

Note: Livestreaming will begin approximately 10 minutes before Mary's service.

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The Final Performance of Mary Doris Phillips
A Life in Full – A Celebration in Five Acts

Opening Night: May 8, 1944 – Fargo, North Dakota

Starring: Mary Doris Phillips (Sachow)

Directed By: Leslie & Lucille (Iverson) Sachow

Final Curtain: July 9, 2025, Age: 81

CAST & CREW

The Star:

Mary Doris Phillips – director of love, curator of community, bringer of light. She was the kind of person who could turn a school auditorium into a stage worthy of Broadway, and a neighbor into a leading man. Her life was a production of joy, laughter, and fierce compassion. Whether welcoming people into her home or casting them in a Madhatter performance, Mary made sure everyone had a role to play - and felt they belonged.

SUPPORTING CAST

- Sam Phillips – her beloved co-star in life, married on June 27, 1964. Their love story was the kind that runs for decades and still brings the house down.

- Children:

- o Molly (Mike) Peterson

- o Pete (Shari) Phillips

- Grandchildren:

- o Margaret Peterson

- o Matthew Peterson

- o Dylan (Gabie Hoffman) Phillips

- o Madison Phillips

- o Max (Hope Grasswick) Phillips

- o Jenny (Trent) Holcomb

- Great-Grandchildren:

- o Leroy Phillips

- o Joshua Holcomb

- o Harper Holcomb

- Extended Family:

- o Nieces and nephews
- o Cousins
- o Lake Blanche Family

IN MEMORIAM

Preceded in death by her loving parents, Leslie and Lucille Sachow; her brother, Gregg Sachow; and her sister, Monica VanShoick

ACT I: Origins & Spark

Born in Fargo, ND, Mary's story began with wide skies and deeper dreams. At age 3, her family built their beloved retreat on Lake Blanche - a place that would later become her home with Sam, and today lives on through Pete and Shari. Even then, she had a flair for setting the scene.

ACT II: Love, Learning & Laughter

Graduating from Fargo High School in 1962, Mary took the stage at Macalester College in St. Paul, MN, where she majored in English Education - a fitting choice for someone who could teach anyone to find their voice. She married Sam in 1964, launching a lifelong duet filled with warmth, dedication, and shared creativity.

ACT III: The Madhatter and Teaching Years

Mary's passion for theatre was not about the spotlight - it was about the ensemble. Through her leadership, the Madhatter performances became more than community plays; they were acts of unity. Mary's passion bloomed into something bigger than performance - it became community. Through her leadership, the Madhatter shows became a beloved tradition. Local businessmen, students, farmers, teachers - all found themselves on stage under Mary's direction. She had a singular gift for making everyone feel important, included, and seen. These weren't just productions - they were love

letters to connection, courage, and inclusion.

Mary spent many years as a dedicated English teacher at Wadena-Deer Creek Schools, where she shaped the minds and hearts of junior high students with both passion and purpose. She believed deeply that reading was the gateway to empathy, understanding and better writing - and she encouraged her students to read voraciously, thoughtfully, and with curiosity. But Mary's classroom lessons extended far beyond grammar and literature. She made service a cornerstone of her teaching, guiding her students to complete community projects that taught them the value of giving back. For Mary, education wasn't just about academics - it was about shaping compassionate, engaged citizens ready to contribute to the world around them.

ACT IV: Lake Blanche and The Retirement Years

Life at Lake Blanche was more than beautiful scenery - it was an open invitation. At Mary's home, no one knocked, because everyone knew they were always welcome. Friends, family, and neighbors came and went with ease, knowing they'd be greeted with warmth, laughter, and fresh coffee. Somehow, whenever Mary wanted to throw a gathering - the weather cooperated. The skies turned blue, the sun came out and joy filled the air. But it wasn't just the weather - it was Mary. Her presence had a way of making everything brighter. Being with her felt like sunshine, no matter the forecast. One beautiful way Mary showed her welcoming personality was through beading workshops she hosted at the cabin. Her table was often surrounded by friends, neighbors, and family - some experienced, others complete beginners - all drawn together by Mary's encouragement and open heartedness. These gatherings were never just about making jewelry; they were about connection. People came to create something beautiful, but they always left with something more; a sense of belonging, a renewed spirit, and often a deeper friendship. In every bead strung and every story shared, Mary was weaving community.

In her later years, Mary's life remained rich with love, creativity, and connection. Being a mother and grandmother brought her profound joy - she celebrated every moment with her children and grandchildren, cheering them on with pride and warmth. Just one week before she passed, she held her great-grandchild, Leroy Wilder Phillips, for the first time - a final, sacred moment of generational love.

FINAL ACT: Legacy

Mary's greatest performance may have been her everyday presence. She made people feel seen, important, and part of something bigger. Her legacy lives in every standing ovation, every cast member who found confidence on her stage, and in the hearts of those she loved fiercely and completely.

AUDIENCE REVIEWS

"She was a gift to this community."

"It was so impressive to see the cross section of the community she could bring together ... just amazing!"

"Her door was always open and welcoming."

FAMOUS LINES FROM SCRIPT

"Remember..."

~ The appropriate response - "I Love You" by her children and grandchildren,

"Goodbye, goodbye, be always kind and true!"

~ Her signature sendoff - sung, of course, and never forgotten.

ENCORE

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation, either in person or by mail, to The Wadena City Library or the Wadena Memorial Auditorium.

Additionally, honor Mary by directing your own act of kindness. Open your door, invite someone in, put someone on stage who doesn't think they belong, sing loudly, love fully - build community wherever you go.

FINAL CURTAIN CALL

Mary exited the stage with a renown legacy, rich in joy, purpose and love. May it continue to echo in the rafters of every home, classroom, theatre, and heart she ever touched.

Cemetery Details

Wadena Cemetery

Franklin Drive & 5th St. SW
Wadena, MN 56482

Previous Events

Gathering of Family & Friends

JUL 19. 10:30 AM - 1:00 PM (CT)

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Colfax Ave. & 1st St. SW
Wadena, MN 56482

Handicap accesible entrance on 1st St SW.

Memorial Service

JUL 19. 1:00 PM (CT)

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Colfax Ave. & 1st St. SW
Wadena, MN 56482

Handicap accesible entrance on 1st St SW.

Tribute Wall



“ Schuller Family Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of Mary Phillips



Schuller Family Funeral Homes - July 14, 2025 at 09:02 PM

TJ

“ I wish we had been able to connect with each other more often over the years. I have wonderful memories of Blanche Lake having spent time there with Monica as a child. Aunt Lucille taught me how to fish (and clean them) 😊. My mom loved your “Mimi” and spoke often about her and the rest of the family. I’m sending my condolences on behalf of our family. Love from Tracy Johnk daughter of Mary Wanner Johnk Whitmer.

Tracy Johnk - May 27 at 03:33 PM

CG

“ Dear Molly and family - I am so sorry for your loss. I remember fondly seeing many Madhatter productions with your mom in them. She definitely had a spark! May God comfort you with all your happy memories and a peace that passes understanding.

Carla (Suchoski) Good - August 06, 2025 at 05:05 PM

CC

“ I never got to meet Miss Mary but I was one of Mr.Phillys' ALC students and he always spoke highly of her. May she rest in peace and be with all of us in our hearts.

Cami Cooley - July 31, 2025 at 06:08 PM

AP

“ Arleen Paulson lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips



Arleen Paulson - July 19, 2025 at 10:30 AM

JG

“ Judy Greenwaldt lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips



judy greenwaldt - July 17, 2025 at 11:13 AM

DO

“ Doug Ostlund lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips



Doug Ostlund - July 15, 2025 at 08:00 PM

HE

“ *She was THE BEST!*



Heidi Erdahl - July 15, 2025 at 06:54 PM

NB

“ *Nancy Brandborg lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Nancy Brandborg - July 15, 2025 at 06:29 PM

NB

“ *Mary was a wonderful friend and director. To this day, whenever I hear the song about going to the chapel, I have a flashback to Mary leading rehearsal warm ups. Mary played a big part in many of my most cherished memories. I will miss her. ❤️*
Nancy (Kohel) Brandborg

Nancy Brandborg - July 15, 2025 at 06:18 PM

TS

“ I had the good fortune of being Mrs. Phillips’ student during junior high and high school at WDC. She was a truly kind and generous teacher who opened our eyes to literary and film classics. While I never got to take part myself, I also remember her asking for students to help put the dock in at the lake each spring, haha. I heard from others that it was always an enjoyable experience. Rest well, Mrs. Phillips. I wish peace to all who grieve her loss.

Tim Snyder - July 15, 2025 at 05:31 PM

ON

“ Old Mark, Younger Mark and Nano purchased the Fairest of All for the family of Mary Phillips.



Old Mark, Younger Mark and Nano - July 15, 2025 at 09:34 AM

ON

“ Old Mark, Younger Mark and Nano planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mary Phillips.

Old Mark, Younger Mark and Nano - July 15, 2025 at 09:34 AM



“ 49 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



Schuller Family Funeral Homes - July 14, 2025 at 08:53 PM

BF

“ Barb, Stella & Families purchased the *Strength & Solace Spray* for the family of *Mary Phillips*.



Barb, Stella & Families - July 14, 2025 at 05:53 PM

DT

“ Dick and Marilyn Twete lit a candle in memory of *Mary Phillips*



Dick and Marilyn Twete - July 14, 2025 at 12:41 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mary Phillips.*



July 14, 2025 at 10:40 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Mary Phillips.

July 14, 2025 at 10:40 AM



“ *Mary was a burst of life. She was interested in so many things, and always asked questions about what was going on in your life - where were you living, what were you doing, what were you reading. She had those bright intelligent eyes. I loved looking at her Blue Ridge plates. From babysitting Molly and Peter to being in the neighborhood at Blanche Lake (first on one side then the other) - I remember Mary's laugh. She was a strong and warm presence and will be remembered. Sympathy to her family. Theresa (Krier) Hest*

Theresa (Krier) Hest - July 12, 2025 at 09:42 PM



“ *Theresa H. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mary Phillips.*

Theresa H. - July 12, 2025 at 09:32 PM

FF

“ From the Durkee family purchased the Treasured Lilies Spray for the family of Mary Phillips.



From the Durkee family - July 12, 2025 at 10:50 AM

GC

“ Gary and Marcy Collins lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips



Gary and Marcy Collins - July 12, 2025 at 09:01 AM

RR

“ Sam and Mary cast us in the roles of a lifetime when they introduced us as the best man and maid of honor in their wedding. It's been a long and successful run, and we are eternally grateful.
Ron and Kathryn Rickers

Ron and Kathryn Rickers - July 12, 2025 at 02:55 AM

CC

“ I have so many fond memories of Mary over the years. She was one of a kind!

Cindy Carew - July 11, 2025 at 11:20 PM

SO

“ How lucky Wadena was to have Mary! So many great memories growing up and being involved in several Madhatters performances. My prayers for her family.

Shannon O'Keefe - July 11, 2025 at 09:31 PM

MP

“ My Aunt Mary was a wonderful person who possessed a level of authentic kindness that is rare. She was a great listener and always made others feel like they mattered. I am sending Prayers and Peace to my Wadena Phillips Family!
Mike Phillips

Mike Phillips - July 11, 2025 at 09:01 PM

DM

“ Dear Sam. Pete, Molly & families, My sincere sympathy at the loss of Mary. She was every thing her creative obituary writer said and left this world a better place. It was a joy to know her & enjoy her Madhatter plays & musicals bring out the best. I enjoyed knowing her family as well. May you find comfort in God's care and hope in the resurrection. Most sincerely, an old WMC nurse from Henning,
Donna Moenck

Donna Moenck - July 11, 2025 at 08:19 PM

SO

“ Sharyl Olson lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips



Sharyl Olson - July 11, 2025 at 05:44 PM

DW

“ *Debbie Wright lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Debbie Wright - July 11, 2025 at 04:34 PM

RH

“ *Rick Fisher/ Don Hoffmann lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Rick Fisher/ Don Hoffmann - July 11, 2025 at 04:27 PM

DD

“ *Darcy D. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mary Phillips.*

Darcy D. - July 11, 2025 at 01:42 PM

DM

“ *Dixie Murray lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Dixie Murray - July 11, 2025 at 01:34 PM

HJ

“ *Helen Jackson lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Helen JACKSON - July 11, 2025 at 10:55 AM

MM

“ *Marjorie Mohs-Harrison lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Marjorie Mohs-Harrison - July 11, 2025 at 07:52 AM

DS

“ *Donna Sartell lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Donna Sartell - July 10, 2025 at 10:01 PM

LM

“ *Lois Miller lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Lois Miller - July 10, 2025 at 09:39 PM

GH

“ *Gene and Kathy Hinman lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Gene and Kathy Hinman - July 10, 2025 at 08:59 PM

DS

“ *Mary was one of a kind, I always thought she knew something she wanted to tell me. I see her often in her children and the grand kids. Sam, Dee and I are remembering fondly the many great memories she left us with. RIP Mary.*

Dan & Dee Skogen - July 10, 2025 at 08:34 PM

GC

“ *So glad to be a neighbor of Mary's. So happy she was able to spend her last months at the lake.*



Gladys Chase - July 10, 2025 at 06:14 PM

KM

“ *I've known Mary for many years. Always a pleasure to visit with her. I can remember her behind me in church and I thought she had such a beautiful singing voice. My heartfelt , sincere sympathy to Sam and the whole family. She will be missed by many.*

Karen Munson - July 10, 2025 at 05:22 PM

KM

“ Karen Munson lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips



Karen Munson - July 10, 2025 at 05:20 PM

RB

“ Ray and Dorothy Beyer lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips



Ray and Dorothy Beyer - July 10, 2025 at 03:44 PM

MM

“ Marjorie Mohs-Harrison

Marjorie Mohs-Harrison - July 10, 2025 at 03:25 PM

JE

“ Judy Erdahl lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips



Judy Erdahl - July 10, 2025 at 03:18 PM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Mary Phillips.*



July 10, 2025 at 02:43 PM



“ *I loved Mary's laugh. When she and Mom would get together to plan things, they would laugh and talk for a very long time. What she gave back to this community was incredible, we are all better speakers, actors, writers and people, because of her. May her legacy live on in us all. My sincere condolences to her family and all her friends.*

Robin Hedstrom Jensen - July 10, 2025 at 01:20 PM



“ *Mary was an amazing director of Madhatters Productions! I enjoyed working with her on many great shows! Her creative approach has been missed for many years!
Prayers that her family will be blessed with strength, comfort, peace of mind, and joyful memories of their time with Mary. 🙏*

Marilyn Nervig - July 10, 2025 at 10:43 AM



“ *Marilyn Nervig lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Marilyn Nervig - July 10, 2025 at 10:35 AM

NP

“ Nancy Peterson lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips



Nancy Peterson - July 10, 2025 at 10:24 AM

TH

“ Sending love, hugs and prayers! Please take gentle care of each other.....God Bless!



Tammie Klawitter Hamlin - July 10, 2025 at 10:21 AM

EL

“ Our sympathy to all who loved Mary. She is an icon in our community. God bless you and be with you, rest in peace.



Elaine & Paul Lorentz - July 10, 2025 at 10:06 AM

LW

“ Lynda Wosmek lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips



Lynda Wosmek - July 10, 2025 at 09:35 AM

LY

“ *Linda Youngbauer lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Linda Youngbauer - July 10, 2025 at 09:03 AM

DG

“ *Donna Grendahl lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Donna Grendahl - July 10, 2025 at 12:38 AM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Mary Phillips.*



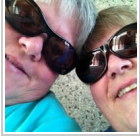
July 09, 2025 at 10:30 PM

MS

“ *Mike and Lea Snyder lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Mike and Lea snyder - July 09, 2025 at 09:40 PM



“ *Rocky Reese lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Rocky Reese - July 09, 2025 at 07:08 PM

JB

“ *Joyce Boyne lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Joyce Boyne - July 09, 2025 at 06:47 PM

RA

“ *Rita Anderson lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Rita Anderson - July 09, 2025 at 06:38 PM

JJ

“ *Jon and Patty Johnson lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Jon and Patty Johnson - July 09, 2025 at 05:36 PM

MO

“ *Mike Ortmann lit a candle in memory of Mary Phillips*



Mike Ortmann - July 09, 2025 at 05:23 PM