

Julie Frances Miller



Julie Frances Miller is the coordinator for the annual Wayside Cabin Activities. The activities are held at the Little House Wayside, otherwise known as the "Little House in the Big Woods" and is the birthplace of Laura Ingalls Wilder (7 miles north of Pepin on County CC). She has been a volunteer at the cabin for Laura Days since 2012 and the coordinator since 2015.

Julie's love of all things Laura Ingalls Wilder started when she began reading the Little House books in the third grade. There are many similarities to the books and her life, as she grew up on a Century Farm near Gowrie, Iowa (in northwest Iowa). Her farm included 2 ½ acres of real prairie as well as the words "The Homestead" prominently displayed on the brick barn.

As a former first and second grade teacher, Julie has always had a love of working with children. She takes great pleasure in sparking people's interest in Laura Ingalls Wilder and pioneer life. Julie has been a presenter at six of the Laura Ingalls Wilder homesites. Since 2013, she has facilitated activities for children at the Laura Days festival in Burr Oak, Iowa. In June of 2016, she was honored to give a presentation at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum about growing up on a Century Farm and the similarities to Laura Ingalls Wilder (the presentation can be viewed at the "HooverPresLib" channel on YouTube under "As an Iowa Farm Girl Thinks"/Julie Miller). A shorter version of this same presentation was given by her in July 2015 at "LauraPalooza," a research and fan-based conference for adults about Laura Ingalls Wilder. She has been one of the main contributing authors of the "Laura's Corner" column for the Kingsbury Journal, which is the newspaper for De Smet, South Dakota. Julie is also known for playing the late 1800's pump organs at all of the L.I.W. homesites. This includes performances and/or sing-alongs on them with Laura fans, including on Laura's own pump organ at her final home, "Rocky Ridge", for the 2019 Wilder Days festival in Mansfield, Missouri.

Currently, Julie is a private piano teacher at her home in Polk City, Iowa (just north of Des Moines) and lives with her husband, Mike, and their son, Luke. Her hobbies include playing the piano, making miniature quilts, making and collecting L.I.W.-related miniature items, and reading about the Ingalls and Wilder families.

Visitors to the "Little House in the Big Woods" during Laura Days can see the cabin decorated with quilts and period items, hear a story and play a game while learning the names of quilt blocks, make their own 9 Patch quilt design, learn to hand-sew squares of fabric together to make a quilt block, play with pioneer toys, and listen to music from the late 1800's. Hours for the cabin activities in 2023 will be Saturday 10-5:30 and Sunday 11-4.