

Des Moines Register

July 27, 2004

Hot dog!

Clive library serves up dinner and a show

By [ABBY SIMONS](#) [ABBY SIMONS](#)

REGISTER STAFF WRITER

July 27, 2004

By the time professional storytellers Scott and Johanna Hongell-Darsee hit the stage, the rec room of the Clive Public Library appeared to have been struck by a tornado.

A giant, educational, hot dog-filled tornado.

Paper plates, coloring books and half-eaten Hostess cupcakes littered the room as children and their parents sat back, satisfied. They listened to the storytelling husband and wife weave fantastic tales of princesses, evil hags and dragons.

Just as organizers had planned, it was the perfect turnout for a perfect event - Thursday's Hot Dog Dinner Theater.

More than 125 children and parents packed the Clive library for the summer program, the second of two held every summer since the library opened four years ago.

Each event, designed for young readers ranging in age from small children to preteens, is designed to be family-oriented with literacy in mind, said Youth Services Librarian Jerri Heid. All have been successful, she said, particularly the dinner theater, which drew more guests - and hot dog demand - than originally anticipated.

"It's just kind of neat to see all this," said Heid, as she and volunteers prepared extra hot dogs for waiting patrons, "for them to be able to have a meal like hot dogs and enjoy some entertainment, just like us adults do."

The entertainment was top-notch and halfway home-grown.

The Hongell-Darsees, seasoned performing artists from Albuquerque, N.M., are no strangers to Iowa. They're the son and Finnish-born daughter-in-law of Clive residents Dave and Vi Darsee. Vi and her husband looked on, as mesmerized as the crowd of young children around them, as the storytellers worked their magic.

"I've seen so many different stories, and they're all fun," Vi Darsee said. "They complement each other so well; it's nice watching them work together."

They weren't the only ones pleased.

Preschooler Spencer Van Waus, 3, finished eating what he wasn't wearing of his cupcake as his parents, Kelli and Phil Van Waus of Clive, watched in amusement. Not only was Spencer enjoying the special events, but he relished being in the library, a place he was familiar visiting.

"We bring him here so he learns that reading is important so he becomes a reader later in life," Kelli Van Waus said.

Spencer added, "My parents read (to) me often and I love coming to the library a lot. I get so fun and I just love it a lot."