

THE PEOPLE'S PARK FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS



On the morning of April 5, 1982, Wolf Trap founder Catherine Filene Shouse received a call from President Ronald Reagan. Having learned that Wolf Trap's Filene Center had burned to the ground overnight, he called immediately to offer support.

The President was just one on a long list of government and civic leaders, artists, journalists, and most importantly, loyal members of the Wolf Trap community who contacted Mrs. Shouse that day eager to help.

While the fire raged the previous night, Mrs. Shouse had talked to staff about finding a way to maintain the launch date for the 1982 summer season, which was just six weeks away. She also resolved to rebuild the Filene Center and uphold Wolf Trap's commitment to being, as President Reagan put it, "a park for all people...one that enriches the cultural life of our nation."

The outpouring of support in the following days, months, and years proved those words to be true. By 1984, 30 years ago this summer, the new Filene Center we enjoy today was opened to the public.



Virtually every sector of the community offered support. Corporations made large grants and donated equipment. Well-wishers from all 50 states sent donations and heartfelt letters. Loyal patrons held bake sales, yard sales, dance-a-thons, swim-a-thons, marathons, and art auctions. **The U.S. Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp.** Stores such as Neiman Marcus and Safeway donated proceeds from sales. Even Washington Redskins players tended bar at a restaurant fundraiser.

Nationally renowned venues like **The Kennedy Center** and local community arts centers hosted performances to help raise money. TV and radio stations also held fundraising drives. **Top artists donated their time** at these events, including **Bob Hope** and **Elizabeth Taylor** at a star-studded gala at D.C.'s Capital Centre.

Staff had **six weeks** to build a **temporary structure** to house the 77-performance season. Nearly every artist agreed to **perform in the makeshift venue**, which was designed and erected by hundreds of volunteers—including professional craftspeople in lighting, sound, wardrobe, and stage design.

Children have always been an **integral part** of **Wolf Trap's mission** and spirit. Following the fire, many sent crayon-written letters to Mrs. Shouse with pennies and nickels taped to the pages. They shared **favorite Filene Center memories**, as well as hopes that picnics and music would come back soon.

