

Family Values Community

The Oppenheimer Family, 2026 Idaho Philanthropy Hall of Fame



Before the many buildings, board appointments, civic campaigns, charitable funds, and community projects, there were **Arthur Oppenheimer Sr.** and **Jane (Falk) Oppenheimer.**

Arthur brought a very different background to their partnership. A native of New York City, he worked as a buyer for Bloomingdale's before

World War II and later served with the Office of Strategic Services, the wartime intelligence agency that preceded the CIA.

Jane descended from the Falk family, whose Idaho roots reached back to the 1860s. Her grandfather, **Nathan Falk**, emigrated from Bavaria, became a merchant, helped establish Boise's synagogue, and founded Falk Department Stores. Her father, **Leo Falk**, continued the family's tradition of community building. During the war years, Jane was also in New York, where she was involved in war-related service through the Red Cross after earlier work with the Navy. She met Arthur there while both were contributing to the war effort. They became engaged in 1943 and married on August 1, 1945, at the Plaza Hotel. After remaining in New York for a time, they moved to Boise at Arthur's urging. He joined the Falk family business as vice president of Falk's Department Store before pursuing his own ventures and eventually founding Oppenheimer Companies.

Their business success was only one part of the legacy they built.

Alice Hennessey, 2025 Idaho Philanthropy Hall of Fame inductee and former President & CEO of the Idaho Community Foundation, remembers Jane as "a force of nature," an absolute delight who was deeply involved in the arts. She remembers Arthur as someone who believed a strong business community and a strong civic community went hand in hand. He did not simply accept that responsibility – he championed it. And he did so with a true sense of joy. Arthur brought humor into rooms where serious decisions were being made. On one of the first grant panels of the Idaho Community Foundation, he joined a group debating how to distribute the Foundation's early grants. Alice recalls that watching Arthur participate in those spirited discussions was "worth the price of admission."



The memory is small but revealing. For the Oppenheims, contributing to community life was never merely an obligation; it was meaningful work enriched by laughter, friendship and the pleasure of doing something worthwhile together.

In 1988, the year the Idaho Community Foundation (ICF) was incorporated, Jane and Arthur established ICF's first endowment fund. They were not simply early donors. They were founding-year contributors who recognized what a permanent charitable fund could make possible for Idaho's communities over time.

Their generosity was matched by action. Arthur served his community through numerous business, civic and charitable organizations, while Jane championed the arts and carried forward the family value of community building. Together, they showed their sons that philanthropy was not confined to writing a check. It meant investing time, opening doors, bringing people together, and being willing to show up.



Jane and Arthur's sons, **Arthur "Skip" Oppenheimer** and **Doug Oppenheimer**, describe their parents as "spectacular people" and great role models. They grew up with both a sense of gratitude and a cultural expectation of giving back. They also learned that service is a two-way street. Community involvement helps others, but it also brings friendships, knowledge,

fulfillment, and a deeper connection to place.

That philosophy became visible across Idaho.

The Oppenheimer family helped give the young Idaho Shakespeare Festival its first home at One Capital Center. Doug saw the space's potential and supported the experiment; audiences followed, and the company began to take root. The family's high standards sometimes made them exacting partners. When Managing Director **Mark Hofflund** described a proposal as good for Boise, Doug corrected him: "We want what's best for Boise." The distinction reflected the family's habit of asking not simply what would work, but what would serve the community best.

That belief also shaped Boise's physical and economic life. During a period when downtown Boise faced uncertainty and empty blocks, the family was among those willing to invest in its future. Idaho Business for Education Chair **Andy Scoggin** describes that investment as a bet backed by foresight, vision, and courage. After finding success, he says, the family looked for ways to share its benefits with the causes and communities they cared about.



Their influence also reaches education, health care, youth development and civic life. Skip Oppenheimer has been especially committed to strengthening education in Idaho. As founding chair and a current board member of Idaho Business for Education, he helped unite business leaders around the goal of improving educational opportunities and outcomes for students across the state. Working closely with fellow 2026 Idaho Philanthropy Hall of Fame inductee **Park Price**, he brought a collaborative, business-minded voice to the effort. Skip also co-chaired the Community College Yes campaign, which helped establish the College of Western Idaho district and expand access to higher education and workforce training in the Treasure Valley.

His health care service has been equally sustained. Skip served three separate periods as chair of St. Luke's Health System, including as its inaugural chair, and later became the inaugural chair of St. Luke's Health Plan; he continues to serve on the plan's board. Known as a calm leader, careful listener and consensus builder, he has also contributed to organizations spanning conservation, higher education, youth development, behavioral health, business and civic life. One of those chapters began with a connection from fellow 2026 Idaho Philanthropy Hall of Fame inductee **A.J. Balukoff**, who invited Skip into the work of the Boy Scouts of America. That introduction grew into a lasting commitment: Skip went on to serve as president and later on the organization's national board and executive committee—an example of how one community leader opening a door can multiply service through another. His board leadership has also included the Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce, The Nature Conservancy's Idaho chapter, the College of Idaho and Boise State University's Frank Church Institute. He also served on the board of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, where he chaired committees focused on bank performance, audit and risk management.

Doug Oppenheimer has carried that same commitment into philanthropy, health care, education, the arts and youth development, bringing a distinctly energetic style to the family's service. Alice Hennessey calls him "the community champion"—enthusiastic, cheerful and determined to make "the better best" in every cause he takes on. As chair of the Idaho Community Foundation, Doug helped lead the organization through its strategic merger with the Idaho Nonprofit Center, bringing together statewide philanthropy and nonprofit training, advocacy and capacity-building. He has also chaired the St. Luke's Health Foundation and the Killebrew-Thompson Memorial, which has raised millions of dollars for cancer research in Idaho, and has held leadership roles with Idaho Business for Education, the Andrus



Center for Public Policy, the Idaho Shakespeare Festival, the College of Idaho, Zoo Boise and numerous other civic organizations. **Steve Burns**, President & CEO of the Idaho Community Foundation describes the quality behind that long record of service: Doug is “funny, engaging and charismatic,” but also deeply attentive—someone who listens, follows up and makes another person feel like the only one in the room. Even while fully present, Steve says, Doug is often “six steps down the road,” already imagining how people and resources can come together to move an idea forward.

Esther Oppenheimer, Skip’s spouse, has extended the family’s tradition of service through a lifelong commitment to art, children, families and Idaho’s cultural community. A Boise native and accomplished artist, she earned degrees in art, early childhood education, painting and counseling from Boise State University, later becoming a licensed counselor and board-certified art therapist. She served as a trustee, board chair and docent for the Boise Art Museum; chaired Serve Idaho, the Governor-appointed Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service; and was appointed to the President’s Advisory Committee on the Arts in 2022. Her contributions have been recognized with Boise State University’s Distinguished Alumni Award, the City Club Stimson Award for Civic Engagement with Skip, and the Boise Mayor’s Award for Support of the Cultural Sector with Skip. Through exhibitions, community leadership and years of introducing children to art, Esther has helped make creative expression and cultural experiences more accessible across the community.

The scope of these accomplishments is significant, but the Oppenheimer family’s legacy is also found in how they welcome, encourage and connect people.

Steve Burns sees the Oppenheimers’ warmth, attentiveness and instinct for possibility as part of a tradition established by Arthur and Jane and carried forward by their sons’ families. Skip and Esther, together with Doug and his spouse, **Mary**, have a combined seven adult children and 12 grandchildren. Across these living generations, the Oppenheimers contribute their time, leadership, relationships and care while bringing joy and humor to the work—helping people feel valued, turning meetings into friendships and taking community needs seriously without taking themselves too seriously.



That may be one reason their example travels so well. Fellow 2026 Idaho Philanthropy Hall of Fame inductee **Steve Carr** describes the Oppenheimers and their peers as successful, happy, and fulfilled, with one clear quality in common: they are givers. Their service happens publicly and quietly, locally and beyond Idaho. From the outside, he says, it is evident that giving has enriched their lives.

For the Oppenheimer family, philanthropy has always meant more than money. It is a way of belonging to a place. It is gratitude translated into participation. It is the willingness to serve on a board, make the introduction, take the phone call, invest in an uncertain idea, and lend one's name and credibility when a cause needs a champion.

It is also an inheritance.

Skip and Doug speak proudly of their spouses' community involvement and of seeing their children build lives shaped by teaching, service and participation. They do not expect the next generation to reproduce the family's accomplishments; they hope each generation will find its own way to carry the tradition forward.

That tradition began long before any Hall of Fame recognition. It began with Jane and Arthur, with a deep affection for Idaho and a conviction that strong communities are built by people willing to invest themselves in one another.

Their children learned the lesson. Their grandchildren are carrying it forward. And Idaho continues to benefit from a family that has shown, generation after generation, that community is not something we simply inherit.

It is something we make together.