

How did the mayor of Wylie, Texas, take steps that resulted in magic being recognized by the U.S. Congress as a legitimate art ... and put him on stage in Las Vegas with David Copperfield?

It all started in Gravel Ridge, Arkansas, when Wylie Mayor Eric Hogue was 10 years old and fell in love with magic. He created the alter ego, Clinky the Clown, and put himself through college performing magic for young people.

Hogue and his mentor, magician and Dallasite Dal Sanders, president of the prestigious Society of American Magicians, crossed paths randomly a couple of years ago, and Sanders let him know of a challenge he and his fellow magicians were facing. They were striving to have magic recognized as an art. "The reason was simple," Sanders said. "Many times magicians apply for grants and get turned down because magic is considered a hobby or a craft." Often, these grants would have enabled magicians to perform in children's hospitals and other venues.

Although it was Sanders' goal to have local and state governments get involved and proclaim a National Magic Week, Hogue's approach was more ambitious. In his role as Wylie mayor, he had worked with U.S. Congressman Pete Sessions, and he approached Sessions about bringing the topic to the U.S. Congress. On April 28, 2014, Sessions addressed the 113th Congress, noting that magic is an art and honoring it for entertaining "audiences with the staging of tricks and creating seemingly impossible illusions." His statement was entered into the Congressional Record.

May 17, Hogue was in Las Vegas with other Wylie officials, attending the International Council of Shopping Centers convention. He received a call from Chris Kenner, executive producer and magic consultant for renowned magician, David Copperfield, inviting Hogue and his party to be Copperfield's guests the next night at his show at the MGM Grand. Feeling like a self-proclaimed "kid in a candy store," Hogue's evening included not only time on stage as the featured volunteer in Copperfield's final trick of the night, but also a private audience with Copperfield, in which he pledged his support in spreading the word that his field had now become an official art form.

As for Clinky the Clown ... he lives on in Hogue's published children's book, "Clinky the Clown and the Secret of Happyville." It's rumored that a sequel is in the works ...