

Prayer Garden at MC to be named for Rhoda Royce March 27th

Special to The Clinton Courier

An anonymous gift to Mississippi College led to the creation of MC's prayer garden in 2014.

Soon, many MC supporters will gather for ceremonies to name the area after Rhoda Royce, one of the Christian university's strongest advocates.

The Rhoda Royce Prayer Garden naming ceremony is set for March 27 at 1:30 p.m. and the public is invited. The event comes as President Lee Royce and his wife, Rhoda, are retiring in May after sixteen years of service to the Baptist-affiliated university.

The garden features fountains, flowers, new sidewalks and seating. "Now, my God, may your eyes be open and your ears attentive to the prayers in this place" is the verse inscribed on a rock from 2 Chronicles 6:40.

MC leaders say the Rhoda Royce Prayer Garden is aptly named.

"Rhoda Royce has been the epitome of a prayerful woman as she lived, taught, and walked among us," said Wayne VanHorn, dean of the School of Christian Studies and the Arts. "In addition to being a source of wise counsel to President Royce, she has been a wonderful Christian witness in her own right."

Naming the prayer garden for Rhoda Royce is a way to show her "how much her ministry among us has been observed, appreciated and emulated," he added.

Others on the Clinton campus applaud her selection.

"Mrs. Royce's sweet spirit, kind temperament and servant heart are evidence that she is a woman who walks and talks daily with our Lord in prayer," said Cindy Melton, dean of the School of Education. "She is an excellent example of a prayer warrior, and one who truly seeks the Lord's guidance."

The honor remains a lasting tribute to her faith and leadership. It speaks to "her passion and commitment to the mission and ministry of Mississippi College," Melton said.

In 1975, Dr. Royce married Rhoda Royce, a former editor with *Open Windows* magazine and other publications with LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville.



Photos special to The Clinton Courier

The MC Prayer Garden will be named for Rhoda Royce (inset above) on March 27.

She's a Magna Cum Laude graduate of Belmont University in Nashville with a master's from the University of South Carolina. Rhoda Royce has worked on the Clinton campus as an adjunct instructor of business communications. For more than a decade, she faithfully volunteered as a tutor to Clinton children. She's inspired MC students at the university's tutoring center at the near-

by Hunter Oaks Apartments.

For sixteen years, Rhoda and President Royce have attended countless university activities – from concerts to sporting events and scholarship dinners. The Royces also open their home to numerous receptions for faculty, staff, students, alumni and other university friends. Their son, Mark Royce, teaches political science classes at George Ma-

son University in Fairfax, Virginia, and NOVA Community College.

MC's First Lady is delighted to hear about the honor she will receive at the prayer garden in the heart of the Quad. It sits a short walk from Provine Chapel that opened in 1860 and remains the institution's oldest building.

"Through the visionary leadership of our anonymous donor, we now have a beautiful place for contemplation and prayer to our loving Father," Rhoda Royce said. "The generosity of this donor, too humble to be personally named but yet choosing to honor me, moves me beyond my ability to describe."

The words of celebrated English poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning come to mind, she says: "God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame."

To have the prayer garden on the MC Quad named for her, Rhoda Royce said, "overwhelms my heart with gratitude."

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