

## HGTV renovation stars to headline MC's scholarship banquet

Special to The Clinton Courier

Television personality Erin Napier, co-host of HGTV's *Home Town*, is known for the watercolors of houses she and her woodworking husband Ben renovate for new homeowners in the Laurel area.

She credits one of Mississippi College's most famous graduates for nurturing her artistic talent, which has helped fuel six seasons of the popular television series.

"Mississippi has such a rich arts heritage," Napier said, "and MC gets to claim one of our state's greatest modern painters, Wyatt Waters. I got to take his workshop in Clinton years ago, before *Home Town*, and have never forgotten those lessons he taught."

Erin will return to Clinton with Ben on Tuesday, April 4, to headline the Mississippi College Spring Scholarship Banquet at 6 p.m. in Anderson Hall in the B.C. Rogers Student Center. Tickets are available for the Office of Giving and Development-sponsored dinner, the largest fundraising event at the Christian University.

"We are excited to speak at MC and see the campus," Erin said, "and to learn more about their arts programs."

Audiences rave about the Napiers' skillful artistry, unabashed Southern friendliness, and deeply rooted Christian values. MC alum Anthony Thaxton, who designed the artwork for MC's Scholarship Banquet, said the couple embodies the warmth and hospitality found in the Magnolia State.

"You can't find two better ambassadors for Mississippi than Erin and Ben," Thaxton said. "They have faith in roots and roots in faith, and this permeates everything they do in a positive way. Ben served as a youth minister for some time, with Erin helping on trips and youth events."

"I believe their influence – and their courage to live and freely express their faith – is reaching more people for God now than they would have been able to do as youth leaders."

MC's Scholarship Banquet has featured well-known individuals from across the spectrum of politics and entertainment, including Reba McEntire, Drew Brees, Dr. Ben Carson, Sen. Bob Dole, Steve Forbes, Rudy Giuliani, Chuck Hagel and Condoleezza Rice.

Katrina Pace, executive director of the MC Foundation, said the *Home Town* duo brings a sense of comfortable familiarity to their celebrity.

"The Napiers are examples of people who had opportunities to establish their careers at other places around the country, but they stayed in Mississippi to make that happen," Pace said. "They have shown a lot of love and care for their state."

"That's an important message for our students, to see people who have remained here and thrived in such a big way with their careers," said Pace.

During their visit to MC, the Napiers will give a small presentation and host a question-and-answer session for students.

"It will be good for our students to spend some time with the Napiers, who can give them wise counsel on how to start their careers," Pace said.

Proceeds from the MC Scholarship Banquet will benefit scholarship recipients at the Christian University. Since its inception in 2008, the banquet has raised more than \$4 million to assist students.

This fall, the first recipients of the Leland Speed Scholarship – full-tuition scholarships for admitted high school or undergraduate transfer students who are residents of Mississippi and live on campus – will enter Mississippi College. That generous gift from the family of the longest-serving board member in MC's his-

tory has clarified how proceeds from the MC Scholarship Banquet are used to assist students.

"The Speed Scholarship is a wonderful opportunity, but it applies only to Mississippi residents, and it only covers the cost of tuition," Pace said. "Scholarship Banquet funds may be used to cover additional costs, including room and board for in-state students and scholarships for out-of-state students."

MC President Blake Thompson will welcome the audience and introduce the Napiers. Television journalist Maggie Wade, who received her B.S. in business administration from MC in 2020, will serve as moderator, presenting questions to the Napiers submitted by audience members.

President Thompson will also announce the Institute for Southern Storytelling at Mississippi College, located in the new Samuel Gore Arts Complex, and its



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co-founders, restaurateur Robert St. John and filmmaker Anthony Thaxton.

Pace hopes banquet attendees will enjoy the evening with the Napiers, but wants them to feel even better about supporting Mississippi College students.

"Our students are always at the forefront of everything we do as a university," she said. "The purpose of the banquet is to help them advance in their education and their experience here."

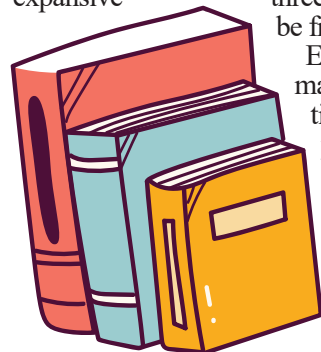
"Of course, getting to know the Napiers and what they've done for our state will be great. It's always fun to spend time with celebrities, have the opportunity to ask them questions, and discover something about them you didn't know before."

Tickets cost \$300 each, and table sponsorships are available. To purchase tickets or for more information about table sponsorships, call 601-925-3968, or visit [www.MC.edu/Offices/Giving/Scholarship-Banquet](http://www.MC.edu/Offices/Giving/Scholarship-Banquet).

## No book sale in April; three-day sale set for May

By Carole Kelly

After successful two-day book sales in February and March, the Friends of the Quisenberry Library will not hold a book sale in April. Plans have been made for an expansive three-day, two-room sale May 4, 5 and 6. Times each day will be from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



Email notices about book sales are sent to a circulation list maintained by Friends. Those wishing to be on the notification list should leave their name, email address and telephone number at the sale desk of the library.

Additional donations are being accepted by Friends to enhance the sale tables, with titles from fiction to history to children's books.

James Pittman, branch manager, has announced plans for a variety of programs in upcoming months, including an Easter egg hunt on Thursday, April 6, at 4 p.m.

Other events include Spring into the Arts Painting, set for the week after Easter, story walks and nature walks for families, and recognition that April is Financial Literacy Month, with an April 1 presentation at 3 p.m., "Embers to Flames Financial Literacy Coaching," with Bevelynne Thornton.

Looking ahead, May will feature a May the Fourth Celebration and Quisenberry Comic Con. In June, Clintonians can expect to see some adult programs added, including "Painting with Bob Ross" on Mondays, a walking group on Tuesdays, a dance group and once-a-month book club on Wednesdays, an acting and improvisation group and a twice-a-month book club on Thursdays, a coffee mixer on Fridays and table top games on Saturdays.

Pittman says he is working to confirm times with a number of group leaders and will send emails as soon as further details are finalized.

The library is located at 605 East Northside Drive. For more information, call 601-924-5684.

