Ann Duke's legacy blossoms through college endowment

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Photo contributed

Southport residents Bill Duke and Marta MacCallum (center) received the "Fundraiser of the Year" award from the Brunswick Community College Foundation recently. The award was presented at the annual Donors/Scholars Luncheon nu foundation director Elina DiCostanzo (right).

nn Brock Duke was known her love of gardening.

Before moving to Southport 2002 with her husband Bill, e was part-owner in an indoor antscaping business for more an 31 years.

Friends remember that when nn visited their homes, she rought a plant or some flowers e had grown.

"That was her trademark for a ng time," Bill Duke recalled.

She was especially known for he beautiful roses she grew. here was a large rose garden lo-ated at her business, and before eaving on sales calls, Ann would ut some to create arrangements hat she offered to potential clients.

"The roses were absolutely gorgeous. Needless to say, she was very successful in getting new business," Bill recalled with a chuckle.

Ann grew up in Greensboro and lived in Raleigh for a few years before settling in Southport. Bill said everywhere she lived, she was involved in the community. Through her work with Master Gardeners, the Southport Garden Club and her bridge club, she turned acquaintances into friends.

"We all loved Ann," said her good friend and fellow Southport resident Marta MacCallum.

When Ann passed away in April 2014, her loved ones and friends wanted to continue her legacy. MacCallum gathered some of Ann's friends to discuss ways they could honor her.

Bill noted they had several ideas, including planting a memorial tree and purchasing a bench with a placard. But ultimately, MacCallum and her friends decided a scholarship would be most appropriate.

"Education is something near and dear to my heart, and it meant a lot to Ann as well," MacCallum said.

They pitched the idea to Bill, along with his and Ann's three daughters.

"We unanimously said, 'We think this is a wonderful idea and we certainly want to be involved in it and be a part of it,' and from there it just got started," Bill said.

The group hit the ground running. MacCallum already was involved with Brunswick Community College through the Women In Philanthropy program and spearheaded the effort.

She and Bill collected the names and contact information for all those who knew Ann. They reached out to them with the assistance of the Brunswick Community College Foundation, a 501(c)3 charity that helps connect Brunswick Community College students with scholarship sources.

Bill said BCC Foundation director Elina DiCostanzo and the staff really helped them get the word out.

"They were very helpful in supporting our efforts and doing the mailers and things like that," Bill said.

Soon after, they were flooded with donations.

"We got a tremendous response," MacCallum said. "People gave generously."

They raised $22,000, and

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>
> **Bill Duke**

Ann Duke, for whom the endowment is named, was a gardening enthusiast.

The Ann Brock Duke Memorial Horticulture Scholarship Endowment was established in just nine months.

MacCallum said they chose to award the scholarship to a horticulture student because of Ann's love of and gift for gardening.

"It helps us remember her, but it also allows somebody else to pursue an education in her field," MacCallum said.

She said it also helped everyone through the grieving process. Two scholarships already have been awarded in Ann's name, and MacCallum said she really enjoyed getting to know the recipients.

"The first scholarship recipient reminded us so much of Ann," she said.

Bill acknowledges a lot of hard work went into raising funds for the endowment, and notes that their success really speaks to the kind of person Ann was.

"When you do something like this, a lot of it depends upon the person you're doing it for," he said. "And Ann was just this wonderful person."

MacCallum and Duke recently attended the annual donors/scholars luncheon at Brunswick Community College. There they, along with other donors, had the opportunity to meet the students who benefit from their scholarships.

"You sit with them, you get to know them, and you get to feel as though you're a part of their educational process," MacCallum said.

During the luncheon, DiCostanzo began telling Ann's story and talked about how an endowment was established in her name.

Bill and MacCallum sat listening to the story, and DiCostanzo called them to the podium.

Bill said he grabbed MacCallum's arm and began to ask her what was going on.

"I said, 'What's happening? I know you knew about this,' and she said, 'No, I did not,'" he recalled.

When they stepped to the podium, they learned they were the recipients of the foundation's "Fundraiser of the Year" award.

"Bill and I were just so surprised," MacCallum said.

For Bill, it was an emotional day.

"As I sat there listening to them talk about Ann, my thoughts were with my soulmate," he said.

Bill is "ecstatic" about the endowment and said he appreciates all that was done to make it happen.

"I don't think Marta and her crew could have done anything that was any more appropriate than what they did do," he said.

Bill and MacCallum hope others will choose to help their loved ones' legacies live on through educational endowments.

"It makes me extremely proud to know that after I am dead and gone—and my kids are dead and gone—that we will still have a scholarship that's got Ann's name on it and it's being presented every year to help some deserving student."

Bill said he knows Ann is excited about it too.

"She wanted young people to be supported and to be able to move forward with their education," he said. "I think she's up there jumping up and down. She's smiling and having a big time with this."