

Women in Leadership Highlights August 27, 2010



“The Life and Times of a True Trailblazer” – featuring Elizabeth Wilson, former Commissioner and Mayor Emerita of Decatur, GA. “Mayor Wilson” played a key role in the desegregation of the Decatur public schools and libraries in ‘60’s and is a pillar of strength, integrity and character. In 2008 Agnes Scott recognized her with an honorary doctorate and the Decatur Education Foundation created a scholarship in her honor for her dedication to cause of justice. Another significant accomplishment was the establishment of a community health center starting with zero funding. Mayor Wilson continues to support unmet needs in her community and is a champion for “seniors helping seniors.” To

commemorate her many contributions, the citizens of Decatur commissioned an 11 FT. bronze sculpture on the city square.

Key take-aways:

Inspirational words in 2008: “The Decatur Education Foundation announces the establishment of the Mary Elizabeth Brown Wilson Scholarship to honor the life and work of Decatur Mayor Emerita Elizabeth Brown Wilson for her dedication and sacrifice to the cause of justice....Driven by principle, Ms. Wilson was relentless in her non-violent protest against injustice and inequity in her community. Her actions changed the course of history and served to ensure that every child in the City of Decatur has an equal opportunity to receive a quality education.”

Inscribed on the sculpture dedicated to her in the Decatur city square: “Imagine a world without limits, without boundaries, without prejudice and blame. Imagine an existence full of self-confidence, self-esteem and not only tolerance but love for others regardless of color, socio-economic or any other standing. To me that is what the future holds. That is what children represent and that is the tpe of world I would like to help others imagine so it can come to pass.”

Her Life Story: During the seminar, Mayor Wilson was “interviewed” by Susan Hitchcock and told her life story in her own words. A profile written by Ms. Hitchcock is provided on the Turknett website: <http://www.turknett.com/sectionR/documents/ElizabethWilson.pdf>

Best advice to young people and leaders of today:

- Lead by saying “what if we...” Takes the focus off of one person as leader and encourages others to join in
- Patience is indeed a virtue...and some things are best done and accomplished not in a hurry, but over time
- Never give up...be persistent and just keep going
- Work hard...there’s no substitute or short cut
- Follow your passion...what you really care about
- Definition of leadership: see what needs to be done and do it.

- Keep family a priority always (note: Ms. Wilson's mother is 100 yrs old and she and other family members visit her every single day.