

Two Mississippi Valley Christian teachers retire, leave lasting impact

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ALTON – Teachers make such a difference in the lives of children and society and general.

Two **Mississippi Valley Christian School** teachers – **Joan Conrad and Donna Thaxton** - who have left a legacy that spans decades recently retired.

The teachers were surprised and honored at the school's annual spring concert with a special monetary gift given to them by former students, friends and family over the

nearly 40-year span. Honoring their faithful dedication in impacting the minds and hearts of students, a long and continuous standing ovation was given these much-loved and appreciated ladies. Both Alton residents and graduates of Bob Jones University in Greenville, S.C., they taught in public education or several years before bringing their teaching skills to MVCS.

Making her U.S. History and Government classes come alive to her junior and senior high school students, Mrs. Conrad describes her teaching experience as “a job with rewards that cannot be measured in dollars and cents, but in the lives of our most precious resources — our youth.” Math, Family Living, and Science classes were also hers, as the need required during the years.

Mrs. Thaxton excelled as the junior and senior high school English teacher, also directing and coaching the yearly high school plays and coordinating efforts in preparing students for the state academic competitions in Schaumburg. She encapsulates her years of teaching in just one word: “ministry.”

Mississippi Valley Christian School Principal **Jerry Fair** has been at the school for 10 years and he said the gifts given to the school and the students from the two women will have lasting impact.

“Both Joan and Donna have been here the entire time I have been with the school,” Fair said. “They have both been real gems as teachers, counselors to the students.”

Joan has done a lot of counseling work with students getting them ready for colleges and helping them get grants as well as teaching a variety of subjects, primarily history, Fair said.

“Joan got the kids involved in D.A.R. and the V.F.W. and would often take them down to the radio station to tape their speeches,” she said. “Mrs. Conrad did a lot of the extra things and used to be the Senior Class sponsor. She would go on trips with them and coordinate junior and senior banquets for kids and was involved in many fund-raisers. She took a personal interest in the students.”

Donna was primarily an English, speech and drama teacher and took the students to statewide Christian schools competition near Chicago and helped prepare them with the speeches and poems through her career, Fair said.

“She was also our fine arts coordinator,” he said. “She also used to be a judge for the speech competition. She was quite knowledgeable in the areas of literature and speech.”

Fair closed by saying that the efforts of Thaxton and Conrad will be missed as Mississippi Valley Christian moves forward.