



Delta Dunklin Democrat

Statues dedicated Saturday

Wednesday, September 14, 2016



Photos by Steve Patton, staff

A group gathered at the Dunklin County Library Saturday morning to dedicate statues to the memory of Jim Blackmon. Pictured above is Anita Blackmon speaking to the group during the dedication. Below are the statues of two children playing marbles.





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Statues dedicated Saturday in Blackmon's honor

Friday, September 9, 2016



Photo by Jeff Dorris, staff

Larry Lugar (left) and his son, Geordan, of Lugar Foundry and Fabrication of Eads, Tenn., installed two statues of children playing marbles on the grounds of the Dunklin County Library Thursday. The statues honor the memory of Jim Blackmon, a longtime Kennett teacher and marble enthusiast. A dedication for the statues is scheduled for Saturday morning at 9:30 a.m.



Delta Dunklin Democrat

Neighbors: Jim & Anita Blackmon

Saturday, September 6, 2014

Meg Benson Interim Editor



Jim & Anita Blackmon

If you find yourself at the Fall Into Arts Festival in downtown Kennett today, you might want to step inside The Opera House and visit with Anita Blackmon. She will be working as a volunteer in the festival's art contests category, which will be displayed inside the building, along with various arts and crafts vendors. But, Blackmon will also be cooking up an art venture of her own.

The long-time Kennett piano teacher (48 years, in fact) would like to raise money for a statue to be installed at the Dunklin County Library in Kennett, in honor of her late husband, Jim. To the hundreds of students who sat in Mr. Blackmon's 6th grade math and reading classes at Kennett Junior High School, from 1968 through 1995, he will always be remembered as the teacher who liked to use marbles in his lessons. A favorite math drill saw students using marbles to calculate and build small pyramids. But a Blackmun classroom was also no stranger to lesson plans involving frisbees and chess tournaments. Even though Mr. Blackmon retired from full-time teaching in 1995, he continued as a Kennett Middle School substitute, until 2010.

In addition to honoring her husband's years as a teacher, and all-around marble lover and collector, Mrs. Blackmon also hopes her efforts will ultimately add to the collection of outdoor art in downtown Kennett. The library already features three other memorial statues at its entrance. Blackmon said she is also a fan of the beautiful Art Deco embellishments on the exterior of the Dunklin County Courthouse.



Photo by Laura Ford, staff Marble pyramids used in Jim Blackmon's sixth grade math classes at Kennett Junior High School.

Blackmon is in the process of selecting the appropriate image with which to inspire a sculpture. She is particularly fond of the Norman Rockwell painting, "Marble Champion," which graced the cover of the Saturday Evening Post on Sept. 2, 1939, and a similar image from a June 1949 cover of the Women's Home Companion. Blackmon is also consulting with various foundries, including the respected Lugar Bronze Foundry in Tennessee. She said the owner, Larry Lugar, told her he could fashion the statue from a strong metal alloy. He also said he wanted to gather as much background material and photos of Mr. Blackmon, as possible, so that it could inform his sculptural work.

The three statues previously installed at the Library include the original by sculptor, Max Turner, entitled "Learning to Read," and donated in memory of Kennett teacher, Jane McKeel, by her sons, Jiles and Stuart. The statue features two small children, sitting on a bench, with a book between them. The second statue installed was donated in memory of Kevin Wade, a Bragg City, Mo., native, who worked for the St. Louis Cardinals. Friends, relatives and even the baseball franchise, itself, donated, in order to make the sculpture possible. It is entitled "Baseball Pitcher" and shows a young boy, winding up for a pitch. The most recently-installed statue, in memory of long-time VNA Nurse and KTMO-FM Radio's "Answer Nurse," Carol DeGraw, was dedicated in a ceremony last November. It features a young girl sitting atop a world globe, reading a book. It is entitled "Girl Sitting on Globe, Reading." The design was selected to honor DeGraw's love of travel and medical missions. She also enjoyed reading, and belonged to the Library's book discussion group. She was also inducted into the Library's Hall of Honor in 2010.

Dunklin County Library Director, JoNell Minton, said the Library would be more than happy to receive the Blackmon marbles statue, once it is created.



Photos provided Anita Blackmon, of Kennett, hopes to raise enough money to install a marble-themed statue in honor of her late husband, long-time teacher, Jim Blackmon, at the Dunklin County Library. The new statue would join three others at the Library, including the statue installed late last year in honor of VNA nurse, Carol DeGraw.

Today at The Opera House, Blackmon will have with her a small mock-up of the marble pyramids her husband's students used to create, to help explain the project to people and gather support for it. "Everyone, so many of his former students, tell me, 'Remember the marble pyramids we made in his class? I still have mine.' All those people kept those marble pyramids that they had glued together in class," she said

Blackmon experimented with the idea of using several different types of balls to create the mock-up, while on a recent shopping trip to the Walmart Supercenter in Kennett. She said she finds it particularly fitting that she finally settled on using table tennis balls, since her husband was also a

big fan of the sport. Blackmon enlisted the help of a friend and former Kennett art teacher, Fern Daugherty, to create and paint the mock-ups. Later, on an errand to Ken-Mo Agriculture, to pick up some spray for her garden roses, she also left behind a stash of clay with store employee Joey Yount, a former homeroom student of Mr. Blackmon's who had volunteered to fashion a prototype for the design process.

Blackmon hasn't finalized fundraising plans for the campaign yet. She predicts the project will ultimately cost \$20,000-\$30,000, because she would like the statue to be solid, a durable feature over time and in harsh weather. She also hopes to have special, collectible marbles designed that can be given as thank-you gifts to campaign supporters. Blackmon is also meeting with law experts in town, to make sure her project has the proper legal structure for a not-for-profit organization. It will be named "Marbles for Jim."



™Norman Rockwell print

For more information, or to get involved with "Marbles for Jim," visit Blackmon's new Facebook page about the project. The page is currently under construction.