

Clarice Gladney

The late Agnes Clarice Taylor Gladney was fondly known as simply Clarice. Born and raised in Oklahoma, she attended Talladega College in Alabama, where she met and married John H. Gladney Jr. upon her graduation. She and the late Dr. Gladney had three children, John Jr., Connie (Agard) and Judy who grew up in University City. After receiving her master's degree in speech pathology from St. Louis University, she became a speech therapist for the Special School District, primarily serving students in the School District of University City.

Clarice grew up in a home where God, faith, family and community service were paramount. She embodied her father's motto: "Our job is to each day 'make someone's smile a little brighter, someone's load a little lighter.'"

Clarice was an activist in her own quiet way... during her college years, she became a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Chi Chapter in 1942. From soup kitchens to schools to hospitals to cemeteries. Clarice served the community. She was especially concerned about the welfare of the Black community who could not speak up for themselves.

One story told of a time when Clarice visited a local hospital during the segregated 1960s, and was angry that a young woman who lost a limb due to cancer was recovering in the basement. Seeing the deplorable conditions was her "call to action." Her activism was a catalyst to eliminate the poor assignments for Black patients. With similar outrage, she wrote a protest letter to a local cemetery that eliminated the signage of a black hand pointing to the "Black" section and a white hand pointing to the "White" section.

In a proclamation from the Elijah P. Lovejoy Society in 1999, Clarice and John's spirit was summarized, "Through your courage and conviction, you have set new standards in the practice of health care, race relations, education, the arts, religion and public service... the citizens of this region are the proud beneficiaries of your life and work."

More information about the MLK Spirit Award and nomination information for 2014 are available at www.ucityschools.org.