



Phyllis Sockwell

Chapel Hill and Carrboro are nationally known for their public schools, and Phyllis Sockwell had a lot to do with putting our district on the map.

- A Hartville, Ohio, native, Phyllis came to Duke for graduate school and on her second night in town helped Kemp Nye play a trick on a customer at Abernathy's Record Store. The victim, a Southern gentleman by the name of Lee Sockwell, swept her off her feet and in December of 1953, they were married. A professor at the UNC School of Dentistry, Lee enticed her to move to Chapel Hill.
- From 1975-83, Phyllis served on the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School Board, including 5 years as its chairman. In that capacity, she shook the hand of every graduate and even today, parents often recognize her from their children's graduation photos. Phyllis led the school board during an important time in the district's growth, helping it gain accolades and acclaim for student achievement.
- In 1984, Phyllis was the founder and president of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Public School Foundation, which has distributed almost \$4 million in support of innovative programs and

projects in our local schools. The foundation awards the Sockwell Chair for Excellence in Teaching Primary Grades, honoring Phyllis and her aunt, who was also a teacher. She also served as chairman of the PTA Thrift Shop Board, and as PTA president at various schools.

A former first-grade teacher and a lifelong passionate advocate for K-12 schools, Phyllis also supported higher education. She and Lee established the Dr. Clarence Lee Sockwell Award in Dental Anatomy to recognize superior achievement by a pre-doctoral student at the UNC School of Dentistry.

When Phyllis began volunteering with the schools, Chapel Hill was a much smaller place. She recalls there was only one high school, and only three grocery stores -- and she knew at least half the other customers. Now there are three high schools, including one in Carrboro, many grocery stores and you may not know anyone shopping at the same time you are.

“I care about people. I care about our town. I care about making things better for others. This is why I do the things I do,” she says. “Volunteering for the various school related organizations was challenging and interesting. I am grateful for these opportunities. They have enriched my life and I hope they have enriched our school system”. Looking forward, she hopes that residents and the leadership of Chapel Hill and Carrboro plan carefully. “We need to preserve a good attitude towards all people and how they wish the town to be.”