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Office of University
Communications

November 17, 2014

Dr. Lonnie Proctor Passes Away at 85

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. — Gardner-Webb University Professor Emerita Dr. Lonnie Proctor, remembered as a driving force for Special Olympics and as an educator dedicated to her students, passed away Sunday, Nov. 16. She was 85.

Proctor began teaching health and physical education at Gardner-Webb in 1969, and she spent 24 years as an educator for the University. She was selected Faculty Emerita of Physical Education in 1992.

Proctor will forever be remembered and valued for her impact on the lives of students, said Dr. Dee Hunt, a longtime GWU faculty member and administrator, and now GWU Vice President and Dean of Student Enrollment. “As a professor, she was demanding, gracious, and fair, and the students would scramble to enroll in her classes,” Hunt shared. “Dr. Proctor was a model of grace, service to others, a compassionate educator, my friend, and certainly a legacy for all who knew her.”

While teaching at Gardner-Webb, Proctor worked with her students to organize a local Special Olympics program for the mentally disabled. Approximately 35 of her students forged careers working with the disabled due to the program, which she managed for 20 years. Awarded and recognized nationally for her work with the Special Olympics, she was also one of the first women inducted into the Shelby Athletics Hall of Fame.

“She was perhaps best known for her work with and leadership in Special Olympics,” Hunt remembered. “She made the event a tradition on campus, and alumni continue to talk about the impact the Olympics had on their appreciation for service and compassion.”

Proctor was born in Kansas and raised in Pennsylvania. She began her teaching career in physical education at a Kansas elementary school, and she followed that experience with time as a high school teacher and then a physical education instructor at North Greenville College in South Carolina.

In addition to her work in the classroom and with the disabled, Proctor was known for her aid to a variety of other community organizations. Those included the United Way, Council on Aging, Hospice, and Delta Kappa Gamma.

Noel Manning, now GWU Associate Vice President for Communications and Marketing, was one of Proctor's students. He recalled her kind and calming spirit.

"She cared for her students and for their success, inside and outside the classroom, even beyond graduation," Manning offered. "I can attest to her dedication to the University and to the population she taught. She was one of the most genuine people I have ever met, and her legendary contributions to Gardner-Webb and Cleveland County have established a foundation worthy of recognition and honor."

A physical education professor, she was also an athlete, attending numerous state and national Senior Games competitions. She participated in the National Senior Games in 1996, winning gold medals in high jump, shot put, and doubles badminton; a silver medal in singles badminton; and a bronze medal in horseshoes.

"One of my most memorable times with Dr. Proctor occurred when we competed as badminton partners in the State Senior Games," Hunt remembered. "However, we never chose to compete against each other. She rarely lost any competitive encounter. She was an athlete, she loved to compete, and she was a gracious winner."

Funeral services for Proctor will be held Saturday, Nov. 22, at 2 p.m. in the sanctuary of First Baptist Church in Shelby, N.C. The family will receive friends following the service.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, preparing them for professional success and for productive citizenship.