



MID-SOUTH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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MSCC Employee Paints ‘Memory’ To Commemorate End of an Era

When approached to create a commissioned painting that would embody the spirit of Mid-South Community College, Sherri Reid, a seven-year employee of the institution, said she would try.

On Tuesday, June 30, her effort met with enthusiastic approval when unveiled at a campus-wide meeting that signaled the end of one era and the beginning of another. Pending official notification of the Higher Learning Commission, MSCC will become Arkansas State University Mid-South this month.

“I was so humbled to have been asked to commemorate the end of an era with a painting,” Reid said. “I knew it needed to be representative of everything that happens here. That’s a lot of pressure; it was bigger than me. At one point, I almost said, ‘I can’t do this.’”



Diane Hampton, MSCC Vice President for Institutional Advancement, said everyone agreed that Reid was the logical person to tackle the project.

“We knew we were asking a great deal, but we believed that Sherri could create something that would capture the essence of Mid-South Community College in a way that all of us could appreciate. She certainly lived up to our expectations.”

The painting depicts the front of the Donald W. Reynolds Center for Educational Excellence and will be displayed in the campus’ centerpiece building.



Employees and others associated with the college received posters that include the image as well as signatures of more than 140 people who are part of the institution’s rich history. MSCC Graphic Designer Pete Sullivan designed the poster.

Mid-South Board of Trustees Chair Mary Toney addressed employees at the meeting and explained the effort.

“I wanted everybody who works for this campus to

remember this school. I didn’t want anybody to leave here today without having something. I don’t mean for this to sound selfish, but I’m glad I was your outgoing chair because I’ve had the opportunity to think up ‘How can I make everybody that works at this school remember us?’”

A group that included Toney, Hampton, Dr. Glen Fenter, Deborah Webb, and others agreed that a painting that could be digitized for use on a poster would serve as an appropriate memento for the occasion.

Toney said Reid “did on canvas what I think each of you has done every day; it has come from your heart.” She added that the painting and poster give everyone the opportunity “to remember this season in our lives.”

Reid, who has enjoyed painting since elementary school, said commission pieces are difficult in general, and this one proved especially challenging.

“I always have to keep in mind that I’m not painting a picture; I’m painting a memory. That’s very, very hard. I just said, ‘God, help me paint something that indicates who we are, not what we are.’

“That’s when I realized it didn’t have to be perfect. I’m not perfect; the college isn’t perfect. We just do the very best we can do every day, and that’s all that painting is. You have to let the canvas speak to you, and usually it does with the help of God. I got into it and just couldn’t stop painting.”

Adding to the complexity of the project, however, was the overall physical nature of the subject.

“It was very difficult to get started because it’s a building,” Reid explained. “It’s a brick building, but inside it’s full of light, and I wanted the background behind the fountain to be bright through the windows because that’s the people, a very diverse group of people.

“Another thing that was difficult was the color. It’s either the cream-color concrete or the red brick. It’s gorgeous in an architectural rendering, and when it’s built, it’s beautiful as a structure. But when you paint it like that, it doesn’t bring a lot of life to the canvas. I had to really think about other ways to do that.”

Reid said she spent about three weeks working on the painting and “burned a lot of midnight oil” in the process.

“I wanted it to mean something to every person who signed,” she said. “I wanted us to be able to look at it and say, ‘Things might change, but the foundation is always going to be here.’

“The painting has a lot of symbolism in it. I don’t know if other people notice this or not, but if you stand and look toward the college, you see a lot of crosses. I think that is indicative of who we are. I think we all agree that we’ve had a lot of divine intervention.”

Reid, who serves as the college's Director of Program Compliance, said symbolism is included in other ways as well.

"We thought the fountain was cool enough to use as part of our logo, and that's what we all think of when we see that logo. I think it has a lot of symbolism in it too. It's iconic; it's beautiful; it's fluid.

"You might have an idea here, and I'm over there, but we all go up in the spray of the water and come down in the same pool. We're all on the same team, and when push comes to shove, we come together as a family. As the old goes out and the new comes in, you want to remember the people who were here at the end of an era."

In addition to splashes of color, Reid included some gold foil behind the fountain "because I think it's just golden here. I think what we do for some of our students is worth gold to them."

Ironically, Reid didn't want the painting to overshadow the signatures.

"I did not want the painting to be the focus. I wanted the signatures to be the focus. I think it should be representative of all of the signatures around it. It's not about the artist and the painting. It's about the people."

The award-winning artist, who donated half of her commission to the MSCC Foundation, said she painted what she hoped would bring smiles to the faces of those who see it.

"It was inspired with divine guidance, and I hope that people can look at it and have a memory that the painting brings back to them," Reid said. "I hope that it's a reminder of the family that we have here."

"Probably the most difficult thing in that painting was 'Do I feel something when I look at it, or have I just painted a building?' And I did feel something, and when it was over, I cried. I thought I had hit my personal mark with it. Whether I've hit the mark for other people I don't know; I can only hope."

Based on reactions from fellow employees and others who witnessed the unveiling, Reid more than hit that special mark.