

## *Lutrecia Stephens*

Lutrecia Bennett was born and raised in a rural community just outside a small town, South Fulton, in northwestern Tennessee. She was most fortunate to be raised by two loving and nurturing parents and extended family who instilled in her the values and sense of the importance of the family unit which she has held.

As a student in a small high school, and because of its small enrollment, she had the opportunity to participate in many activities. She was a member of the school's Latin Club, competing in a state contest with 4 of her fellow classmates. She was active in Future Homemakers of America, holding school and regional offices. She was inducted into the school's Honor Society. She also was on the yearbook staff and graduated ranking third in her class. Having had several inspirational teachers, her desire to become a teacher was fostered. As the first in her family to attend college, she enrolled at Austin Peay State University with plans to major in English. After one quarter of studies, she changed her major to Home Economics and relocated to the University of Tennessee, Martin branch, finishing her sophomore year. She married her husband, Wallace Stephens, then completed her BS degree in 1963 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Her husband was recruited by McDonnell Douglas Corporation while in his senior year at UT, so after their graduation, they moved to Florissant, Missouri and settled into their home in High Ridge a year later. Lutrecia did not begin her teaching career until after her two wonderful daughters were born and she had worked at Nooter Corporation for two years as an office clerk. Her first year with Northwest R-1 was spent as a substitute teacher. In 1967, she was hired, along with Gloria Venable to fill vacancies made by the departure of both Home Economics teachers at that time. She served as department chairperson for all of her 34 years of teaching. During those 34 years, Lutrecia was instrumental, along with her colleagues, in transforming the Home Economics program from two yearlong comprehensive courses, I and II, to many specialized semester courses so that students had a greater opportunity to focus on their own individual interests and expand the instruction in those areas. Those areas of study included 3 levels of food preparation, 3 levels of clothing construction, home crafts, fashion strategies, consumer issues, housing and interior design, 2 levels of child development, family living, and independent living, (helping students to be successful living on their own). All of these added courses required that detailed descriptions, lesson plans, learning standards, and assignments be developed. As the department chairperson, Lutrecia assumed the primary responsibility for the creation and production of these documents, and was tasked with writing curricula several times. Also, throughout the years at NHS, Lutrecia served on a number of staff committees, including principal selection, studying possibilities of block scheduling, and staff selection. She was a

staff advisor for Future Homemakers of America and Key Club, a student service organization affiliated with the Kiwanis organization. After teaching more than 20 years, with the urging of colleague Sandy Wynn, Lutrecia continued her education at Southwest Baptist University earning her Master's degree and adding 30 more graduate hours above that. Shortly before her retirement, she was the recipient of an APPLE award. When she retired in 2002, she was not ready to really be retired so she embarked on an 18-year extension of her association with the NHS family by being available for substituting when needed until Covid-19 forced an end to that.

Today, Lutrecia is enjoying a renewed passion for counted cross stitching, being able to work all of the newspaper puzzles each day, having an occasional lunch with her girls and friends, watching Cardinals baseball and especially spending time with her daughters, Lisa, married to John LaFrance and Sharon, married to Mark Davis, grandchildren, Amanda, married to Austin Lowe, Ryan and Madeline, and two adorable great-grandchildren, Jacob and Josie. She can be seen at most area craft shows in the fall and spring. She is also the primary caregiver to her beloved husband of 60 years who suffers with Alzheimer's disease.

It is an honor and a pleasure to welcome Lutrecia Stephens into the Northwest Alumni Class of 2022, Hall of Fame Distinguished Educator of the Year recipients.