

Anne Sullivan

Magnolia Speech School

By **NASH NUNNERY I** STAFF WRITER
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Anne Sullivan had a bucolic childhood growing up in the small, Southwest Mississippi community of Tylertown.

She lived self-described “Norman Rockwell days” of homemade sugar cookies and ice cream socials, church activities and playing junior high and high school basketball while learning the importance of grace.

“Growing up in Tylertown, I was blessed beyond belief,” she said. “I’ve understood grace for as long as I can remember because it was given to — abundantly — from day one by my family and the people of the town.”

Sullivan has served as executive director of the Magnolia Speech School in Jackson since 1994, when the school had 27 children and a debt of \$100,000. Today, MSS is debt-free and Sullivan oversees a budget of over \$2.2 million.

She is passionate about her work.

“To lead a staff of dedicated, skilled professionals in assuring that more of Mississippi’s children with hearing loss and language disorders have the opportunity to speak for themselves and mainstream back into the community is the greatest thing I could do,” Sullivan said. “As I look back over the years, I am pleased and amazed at how far the school has come.”

Recently, Sullivan was elected as president of OPTION Schools Inc., a membership organization of more than 50 independent private schools that provide education and therapy services to children or are deaf or hard of hearing.

“Anne possess an exceptional business acumen, and a great sense of caring for others that have made her successful in providing leadership for us and the Magnolia Speech School,” said David Hassell, OPTION’s co-executive director. “Her ability to take a no-nonsense approach to business is key to her success.”

Sullivan’s road to becoming the top



executive at Magnolia Speech School is an interesting one. She actually began her career there as a teacher after graduating from Mississippi College in 1972.

After leaving in 1986, Sullivan served as director of theatre at MC until returning to MSS. She has guest directed plays at Millsaps College, New Stage Theatre, Clinton Community Theatre and Galloway

Methodist Church. She loves the stage.

“I believe stories told in plays can reveal truth about our lives. (Plays) allow us to laugh, cry, to think and to be entertained,” she said. “They are often a source of inspiration.”

Giving back to the community is the MSS mission, says Sullivan.

“Magnolia has partnered with the Jackson community since 1956, and we’ve established strong relationships with the civic groups and churches statewide,” she said. “My personal contribution to the business community is that our program gets our alumni back to the work force.”

What advice does she have for other women who want to make a difference?

“Find something you really care about and get up every morning determined to do the very best you can,” she said. “Take tough times and mistakes as opportunities.”

She and husband, Virgil Brawley, are active members of Northminster Baptist Church.

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