

engage



Brooks Embraces New Home

While the promise of new professional challenges brought Dr. Irma Rodriguez Brooks from El Paso, Texas, to Decatur, it is the friendly people, engaging sites and attractions, and sharing spirit that make her feel truly at home in our community.

“I simply fell in love with this city,” says Brooks, who was named Executive Director of the Decatur Area Education Coalition in February. “Everyone I’ve met has been welcoming, friendly, and very outgoing.”

Brooks reciprocates with her own brand of enthusiasm — one that embraces everything from Decatur’s unique architecture to its lake. “We own a catamaran and in El Paso, we had to drive four or five hours to find water,” says Brooks whose husband, Dr. Gary D. Brooks, graduated from Millikin University and served as the University’s Dean of Men in 1967 and 1968.

“I have traveled a lot, and have lived in a big city for many years. But many large communities don’t have nearly the range of arts opportunities and events that I’ve found in Decatur. I’m also an architecture buff, and I think the buildings on Millikin’s campus are gorgeous.”

From her former position as Director of Magnet Schools and Smaller Learning Communities with the Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso, Brooks also brings a wealth of experience to the challenges facing Decatur’s schools. And within that framework, she senses an abundance of potential and resources as well.

“It is rare that an entire community comes together to address students’ needs,” Brooks says. “I see educators and volunteers spending time with students before and after school, and working within, and outside of, the schools. What intrigues me most is the commitment to start reaching children at the pre-kindergarten level.”

The challenge, she admits, is tapping into this trove of time, talent, and treasure, and marshaling its momentum on behalf of young learners. “Getting everyone together to collaborate and to share information and goals is imperative,” Brooks says.

A visit to any one of the schools in the community, she adds, reinforces the mission — and the potential. “Our students are polite and motivated,” Brooks says, “and they feel safe in our schools.”

With its many personal and professional perks, however, life in Decatur still lacks one key plus. Brooks looks forward to sharing her new home with husband, Gary, who’s still earning frequent flier miles from El Paso, and hosting visits from her sons Daniel, Christopher, and Greg.

To get in touch with Dr. Brooks or join the Education Coalition call 429-3000 or go to www.edco4kids.org.

Pictured at the Education Coalition Roundtable meeting to welcome Irma Brooks are Coalition members Gail Evans, Jan Mandernach, and Joe Havis.

