

LIFE LEGACY AWARD

Richard Wuttke



Richard Wuttke was born and raised in Toledo, Ohio, and attended Mount Vernon Academy. He spent his college years at Southern Missionary College and Atlantic Union College. He began his teaching career at South Lancaster Academy, where he taught history, biology, and voice and was the choral instructor.

In 1959 he married Joyce Kneller, and to this union, the Lord brought three children: Joya, Chip, and Fritz. In 1965, the Lord called him and his family to Georgia-Cumberland Academy. These beginning years of GCA were very exciting for the staff who worked here.

In 1968, Mr. Wuttke accepted a call to Blue Mountain Academy, where in 1971, he moved from the music department to the Bible department and was ordained to gospel ministry in 1975. In 1979, the family moved to Cedar Lake Academy (later Great Lakes Adventist Academy) and remained there for 21 years, working as Bible teacher and chaplain. He retired in 2000 and moved to Southwest Virginia to be near his daughter, Joya Cleveland.

Elder Wuttke has expressed deep appreciation for the way the Lord has blessed him and his family in their teaching ministry. He states, "My life has been so enriched by all of the students and fellow workers who have touched my life with encouragement and blessing. God has been so good!"

Tributes to Mr. Richard Wuttke,
2022 Georgia-Cumberland Academy Life Legacy Award Winner

"I enjoyed taking chorale from Mr. Wuttke. He was gentle, kind, and had a way of exacting his best from his students. I especially appreciated his Christ-like spirit. Congratulations Mr. Wuttke! You truly deserve this Life Legacy Award!" ~ Nancy Blow Howell, '67

"Mr. Wuttke was kind and patient with everyone. I worked very hard to hide the fact that I couldn't read music. I got caught my senior year, but he got me through it!" ~ Rick Howell, '67

"Mr. Wuttke, I was delighted to be able to work as a monitor in the music department. You were typified by your mild-mannered, Christian demeanor. You had good control as a choir leader, but it wasn't because you raised your voice. I think we all wanted to follow and learn from you. Thank you for your godly example to each of us." ~ Kathryn Ippisch Irizarry, '67

"Richard Wuttke was the most influential person in my life during my GCA years. He is one of the kindest, compassionate, godly men that has crossed my path. He took my God-given talent and passion for sacred music to highs I had never experienced. He introduced me to a quality of sacred choral music that I had not known. You have had a very special place in my heart all these years. I will always remember our time together." ~ Don Land, '67

"When I went to GCA at 14, I had no intention to try out for the choir. My grade school choir director had called Mr. Wuttke and falsely told him I could sing. He contacted me and asked me to try out for choir. My audition was horrible. He simply said, 'I'll put you between two other bass and maybe you might learn the part.' Because of Mr. Wuttke, I have been singing with various choral groups most of my 70 years. Mr. Wuttke gave me the gift of song." ~ David Littell, '70

"It is the big smile he gave everyone in passing that remains imprinted on our hearts and lives." ~ Lester Littell, '67

"I had the privilege of participating in both the Aeolians academy choir and the Chorale touring group. I took voice lessons from Mr. Wuttke, and accompanied whoever needed the support of a piano or organ. Teens have a 'sixth' sense to identify adults who are not honest, open, transparent, or genuine. They can determine who can or cannot be trusted. Mr. Wuttke was one of the 'good' adults. It was apparent that he had our best interest at heart. His smile was warm. His encouragement was genuine. He supported us in ways that generated success. He has demonstrated a life of 'soli deo gloria' which translated means, 'For the glory of God alone.' Thank you, Mr. Wuttke." ~ Mary Lou Rahn, '67

“The choir was an important component of worship and praise each Sabbath. Mr. Wuttke fully filled the role of God’s choir director. The way he designed the service with reverence and songs all made us humble and proud to sing for God. Since nature was one of my favorite subjects, I was excited to be in Mr. Wuttke’s biology class. I enjoyed working with him and was thrilled when I became his lab assistant the following year. He was a great teacher and a great boss. He gave me freedom to explore areas of nature that inspired me. He is one of the godliest men I have ever known. He is humble and courageous. He is thoughtful and inspiring. He is honest and steadfast. He walks his talk. One of the greatest assets that the Seventh-day Adventist church has is high school and college staff that mentor young people into solid, directed, courageous, and empowered servants of God. Richard Wuttke is a living example of this type of leader, mentor, guide, and model.” ~ Randy Russell, '69

“Richard Wuttke was a true role model for me to emulate. I never realized that I had a singing voice until choir tryouts. He helped me to read music and understand the significance of vocal harmony. It served me well through college where I continued to travel with the choir. I owe him my gratitude and thanks for discovering this hidden talent that has brought me hours of enjoyment with choirs and other singing groups. As our Lord would say, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ Thank you for taking an interest in my life.” ~ Ben Tallman, '67

“Richard Wuttke, though small in stature, made a very big impression on my young life during GCA’s first year, 1965-66. He took a motley, occasionally rowdy, crew of teenagers and somehow transformed us into a first-rate chorale. There were a few extraordinarily gifted singers among us, but I am compelled to say that a clear majority (myself included) were solidly in the undistinguished average range of vocal talent. Mr. Wuttke’s demeanor was always quiet and unassuming, but with an underlying forcefulness which kept us focused. He had no qualms about challenging us to learn and present some of the world’s great choral literature. My clearest memory of him is also an example of his kindness: frequently we struggled, sometimes with limited success, to master a new piece. Mr. Wuttke, instead of chiding us for being slow to catch on, would take the opportunity to encourage us at the first sign of progress, no matter how small. I’m sure that I am not alone in having a vivid mental image of him whispering, ‘It’s coming.’ This happened over and over again, and eventually had the effect of producing a quality of performance far greater than the sum of its parts. I can say without boasting that the Aeolians had an exceptionally beautiful and mature sound, far and above what could be reasonably expected of a high school choir. Thank you, Mr. Wuttke, for the privilege of having a small part in the making of magnificent music.” ~ Fred Tolhurst, '66