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Connallys Win Accolades From Culpepper Garden

SCOTT McCAFFREY
Staff Writer

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Dr. Thomas and Judy Connally (seated) are shown with family members, political leaders Chuck Robb and Jay Fisette, and Culpepper Garden board chair Susan Philp during a celebration of the Connally family and its civic leadership on June 3, 2017.

Having spent much of his professional life giving speeches, former governor and U.S. senator Chuck Robb has opted to scale way back on the remarks-making in recent years.

But when he was asked to honor his longtime friends Thomas and Julia (Judy) Connally, there was no hesitation.

“To say a good word about Tom and Judy? A piece of cake. We’re talking about two people with a social conscience,” Robb said at a June 3 garden party hosted by the non-profit Culpepper Garden senior-living facility in Arlington. “They have made an everlasting difference in all the people whose lives they have touched.”

Thomas Connally (a physician) and Judy Connally (who served on the Arlington School Board and in the Virginia House of Delegates) were honored by Culpepper Garden not only for their own activism, but for imparting their passion for civic leadership to their children and, now, grandchildren.

The pair – married since 1964 – have worked to “build the bonds of service and giving across the generations,” their son, Tom Connally, said at the event, now in its fourth year. A total of \$100,000 was raised.

After retiring from full-time practice in 2000, Dr. Thomas Connolly has been a stalwart at the Arlington Free Clinic, where he served as medical director for six years. He also is active with his alma mater, the University of Virginia, and is a frequent lecturer for Encore Learning.

Beyond her service in elected and appointed office, Judy Connally has been active with Virginia Cooperative Extension, United Way of the National Capital Area, the Arlington Community Services Board and Women’s Health Virginia.

In a letter read at the gathering, Gov. McAuliffe called the Connallys “stellar examples of how to make a difference in the lives of others.”

Both award recipients expressed appreciation for the honor and what it represented:

- “I just love this concept of community service as a family tradition,” Judy Connally said.
- “It’s a wonderful place to be – an incredible place,” Thomas Connally said of Arlington. “We take care of many of our needy people.”

The June 3 spring fling came as Culpepper Garden officials prepare to embark on a major renovation of the original part of their compound, which dates to 1975. The effort will include exterior repairs, new operating systems, accessibility upgrades and features like new kitchens and baths.

Six additional units will be carved out of space previously occupied by an Arlington County government senior center, which will help to reduce a large waiting list.

Residents will be relocated during the rolling renovation, but none will be displaced, said Susan Philp, who chairs Culpepper’s board of directors.

“It’s going to be interesting, to say the least, but we’re going to manage,” Philp said of upcoming efforts.

Culpepper Garden sits on a 5-acre plot of land along Pershing Drive, offering 267 regular apartment units and 72 assisted living units to those of modest means.

Linda Kelleher, who heads the nonprofit corporation that operates Culpepper Garden, said she was amazed at the generosity of the community in supporting the spring event.

“It’s a record, and I am blown away,” she said, before giving attendees a homework assignment.

“Leave here and tell others how important this facility is,” Kelleher said.