

Mary Settle Cooney
Registry of Honor
2014

Mary Settle Wright Cooney was born to Sheffield teachers Mildred C. and Walton R. Wright. Mrs. Wright taught English and chorus. Coach Wright taught algebra and coached boys' sports for 28 years.

Cooney graduated from SHS in 1960 and attended Florence State College. She married Dr. Joseph C. Cooney in 1962, transferred to Auburn University graduating with a degree in Elementary Education. She taught in the Opelika school system for a brief time. The Cooney's reared two sons, Robert (Bob) and Joseph, Jr. (Chip). Mary Settle was privileged to be a stay-at-home mom until the boys were in high school. During these years she volunteered at her sons' schools and with a number of charitable organizations including the American Red Cross, the Muscle Shoals District Service League, and Sheffield Little League.

Mary Settle accepted a position with the Tennessee Valley Art Association in 1980 and became its Executive Director in 1989. The organization is the largest multi-disciplined arts organization in the tri-state region. She coordinated the restoration of TVAA's historic Ritz Theatre and has served on a number of boards including the Chamber of Commerce, The Muscle Shoals Concerts Association, AmSouth Bank and United Way. She organized the Chamber of Commerce Business Committee for the Arts and served as committee chair for six years. She was a member of the national committee to commission the monumental sculpture of Helen Keller that has been installed at the U.S. Capitol. Honors include: the Times Daily Newspaper's Twenty Influential People in the Shoals, Chamber of Commerce Shoals Citizen of the Year, Sheffield Kiwanis Club's Citizen of the Year, Tuscumbia Civitan Club Citizen of the Year.

Cooney is an avid supporter of the Sheffield School System and a staunch promoter of the Foundation and its objectives. Husband Joe, Mary Settle and her siblings, Dee Munger and Bob Wright (also SHS graduates) established the "Mildred C. and Walton R. Wright Endowment Fund" in 2002. The fund finances grants for Sheffield teachers that enhance learning in English, math and the arts.

Mary Settle is a lifelong member of Sheffield First Methodist Church where she sings in her church choir. She is grateful for her remarkable daughters-in-law, Crisi and Carol, and she looks forward to visits with her beloved grandchildren, Olivia and Walton.

The Sheffield School System's academic instruction and extracurricular opportunities prepared her for has been an enriching and rewarding professional and personal life.