

High-octane CCC director called
a 'visionary' at retirement celebration

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Received the MSRC 2009 Jerry Bridger's Award



Swatzell to focus on scholarship golf tournament expansion

CLARKSDALE – A broad-brimmed straw hat and a handsome pair of engraved plaques fill the seat of a rocking chair emblazoned with a Semper Fi medallion.

Although these symbols of retirement mark the status of some key professional, the crowd wonders why the energetic, high-octane clinical director of Coahoma Community College's respiratory therapy program is standing around?

Circling the vestibule of the Allied Health Center are medical professionals, educators, community leaders, former students, family members and friends of Robert (Bob)



Swatzell who announces he has decided to slow down from day-to-day teaching duties.

“Retirement? No; Change of Direction? Yes.” says Swatzell who will concentrate on expanding CCC’s fund-raising golf tournament for allied health scholarships.

The annual October event has been re-christened the Morgan Freeman Health and Science Scholarship Tournament to honor the sponsorship of Mississippi’s acclaimed Oscar-winning actor and CCC supporter.

Dr. Vivian Presley, CCC president, praises Swatzell and Tony Brooks, respiratory therapy director, as a “great team building Coahoma’s program” and producing students who are “true professionals.”

She cites the importance of Swatzell’s unique brainchild – a competition requiring students to think on their feet and to build ventilators with innovative materials and scant funds.

“What you have done cannot be measured in money but in lives saved,” she said.

Opening CCC’s tributes is a plaque presentation by Scott Lofland of Jackson, past president of the Mississippi Society for Respiratory Care who describes Swatzell as a “visionary” and a long-standing leader among America’s 150,000 certified registered respiratory therapists.

Lofland says the former Marine, “instills in his students the code of ethics and character

qualities to be successful.”

Lofland also cites Swatzell for the excellence of his articles in national newsletters including the AARC Times (American Association of Respiratory Care) and for bettering the quality of state conferences by inviting nationally recognized speakers.

Although former student Eddie Gates calls Swatzell, “Papa Bear,” today, he references his mentor’s strict adherence to discipline and study in the classroom and says the clinical director taught him more than anybody in his life did.

‘It’s been quite a ride; I’ve tried to give back,” says the honoree. “Coahoma is the best place I’ve ever worked; I hope you realize it’s a very special place.”

“I have to have a purpose and I encourage everyone to get involved; otherwise it’s just complaining,” he says.

Photo cut lines

Dr. Vivian Presley, CCC president, and Johnny McGlown, vice president of the CCC Board of Trustees, present an engraved plaque of appreciation to Bob Swatzell.

With his wife smiling in the background, Bob Swatzell, CCC high-energy clinical director of Coahoma Community College’s respiratory therapy program, jokes about his retirement gifts – a straw hat and rocking chair.