

A Philanthropy at Texas

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A timely gift helps jump-start restoration of 1933 Littlefield Fountain

Everyone who knows and loves UT recognizes the Littlefield Fountain at the foot of UT's South Mall. For decades it's been a majestic icon and gateway for the campus. It's no surprise that the fountain, after being in continuous operation since 1933, was greatly in need of conservation and structural upgrades. Learning of the need for a comprehensive restoration and the resources it would entail, **Steve and Rita Millwee** of Dallas stepped up with a donation that gave the project crucial momentum. Thanks to their generosity, the fountain is now in better shape than ever.

Steve Millwee is a UT Austin alumnus, having earned a bachelor of architecture degree in 1972. He is the owner of Dallas-based Millwee Outdoor Advertising. "This was a way to do something for the University, which has meant so much to me personally and professionally," he says. "As an architecture student, my professors emphasized the importance of preserving the great monument art from the past, the beauty of which might not be seen again. I wanted the Littlefield Fountain to be here for future generations of students just as it was for me."



Steve & Rita Millwee pay a visit to the fountain they helped restore.

The fountain, which was switched on for the first time March 26, 1933, was designed and cast by sculptor Pompeo Coppini. Architect Paul Cret, UT's master planner, selected the fountain's showcase location as he was designing and overseeing development of the core campus, including his landmark UT Tower. The fountain was funded by a trust set up by University benefactor Major George W. Littlefield to commemorate war heroes.

Carrying on that spirit, the Millwees' gift was made in honor of nine family members who have served the United States through active military duty. One of those nine is nephew David McCaffree, a U.S. Marine Corps major now on his fifth tour of duty in Iraq.

Prior to its restoration, says William Throop, UT's director of project management and construction services, the fountain was still operating mostly with original equipment. "It was built 75 years ago and had not been fully renovated since then," he says. "The basin leaked, and the plumbing and electrical infrastructure were in very poor condition."

The entire project cost approximately \$1.3 million. The Millwees' donation covered a portion of that total, going a long way, Throop said, toward funding visible repairs to the leaky basin and other areas, as well as bringing the statues back to their earlier glory. The donation also served as a catalyst for the University to accelerate a much-needed renovation of portions of the fountain that are not visible. That phase of the project included the replacement of underground pumps and piping (minerals from the old bronze plumbing tended to darken the statues), an upgrade of the electrical system, and installation of a water-filtration system.

The Millwees' gift — what it means for them personally, and what it helped accomplish — is part of a trend at UT, says Rick Eason, the University's vice president for development. "Wherever you turn on this campus, you will see the effects of philanthropy, from world-class collections to student scholarships, from faculty endowments to facility enhancements. We're proud that Steve and Rita have stepped forward to invest in the restoration of something that's dear to them, and to the entire UT community — our beautiful and historical Littlefield Fountain."

