

## **Living Legend of Cumberland**

### **Mrs. Sophia R. Davis**



Mrs. Sophia R. Davis is a lifelong resident of Florence County. She is the middle daughter born to Mr. Andrew Wilson and Mrs. Eva Rebecca James Richardson and is the big sister of Mrs. Wilson Anne Addison. Sophia, her mother would tell others, is my quiet, loving child and this middle daughter followed her wherever she went. If her mother told her to stay at home, she would quietly steal away and go where she knew her mother would be. That quiet nature harbored a loyal protective spirit of a warrior who fiercely protected the people she loves. The years have not dimmed that dauntless courage nurtured by a father who said that he did not want his girls to be scary and gave them courage and pride and respect for others. Certainly, her upbringing helped to mold her into the woman who learned to love others and helped grow her into who she would be as a teacher loving and unafraid to meet challenges especially in her role as a teacher.

As a young girl whenever anyone asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up, unwaveringly, Sophia would say, "I am going to be a teacher," and unlike others who were unable to decide on their future life goals, Sophia always knew that she wanted to be a teacher and God made her a teacher. After attending Holmes Elementary School where she was selected as a majorette (the dream of many young girls then), she was off to Wilson Junior High and then on to Wilson Senior High School as a rising sophomore.

Following her graduation from Wilson Senior High School in 1962, she enrolled as a freshman at Claflin University, choosing English as her major and in 1966, Sophia received her bachelor's degree in English/Language Arts. In the fall of that same year, Sophia's life goal was realized, she began her career as a teacher. For 38 years, Sophia fulfilled her calling in Florence District 1 serving as a middle school and high school English teacher. That commitment to her calling is still prevalent in her life and students who are now adults laud her praises as to how she inspired them to be good students. They stop her and ask, "Do you remember me? Mrs. Davis you have not changed a bit. You were my teacher", and believe it, she knows them. It is the

teacher in her that indelibly printed her love of teaching on their hearts, and they remind her whether they were good students or not that they are glad that she was their teacher and want her to teach their children. Their acknowledgment of her as their teacher is a testimony of the belief that she was going to be a teacher and of her commitment to her career. She enjoyed teaching and nurturing her students. It is that which has made her a beloved teacher whose students still talk about her impact on their lives. Although she has retired from full-time teaching, that teaching spirit is alive and well and she works part time as a reading specialist at North Vista. No one knows how she does it, but Sophia Davis can teach students to read and make them want to learn.

Growing up in East Florence, Sophia came to church at Cumberland with her parents, grandmother, Sophia Howe Richardson and her Uncle Houston. As a child and until and through her years as a teenager, she participated in the life of the church: singing on the choir, attending Bible School and Sunday school at the Mission, and attending Methodist Youth Fellowship and Girls Scout meetings. It is that nurturing and grooming by the members of Cumberland and her family that fostered her commitment to serving God. The expectation was that you learned and practiced what the church's mission was, and you lived that life as an adult. That commitment continues until this day in her service to Cumberland in many areas of mission and leadership: serving on the Church Council, and as chairperson of Education and Status and Role of Women. For more than 20 years, she served as the Director of Vacation Bible School. She always had many children and adults who eagerly and faithfully participated in the program and had willing workers who taught classes, decorated, and served delicious food, a calling card for many who came to Vacation Bible School. Need it be said that she is an excellent cook and baker as many Cumberland people can attest. If you have not had a slice of her famous, mouth-watering pound cake, it was because someone else got to it before you did.

She has also worked with other teachers from the church providing afterschool homework assistance at the Outreach Center. That spirit of helping others inspired her to join the committee who served in the summer feeding program at the Outreach Center in 2019.

Presently, that spirit of doing what God expects of His followers is the reason she serves as an usher, on the SPPRC, and as a member of the United Methodist Women organization serving as a Captain of one of the teams for the Fund-Raising Committee and as a program participant on the Women's Day program. She has even pinched hit as the Council's secretary taking minutes. It speaks to a woman who serves wherever she is needed.

Sophia married Liston Davis, Jr., her childhood sweetheart, the summer she graduated from college in 1966. They were married for 42 years and she and her husband worked in the church and raised their 2 children, Kimberly Joan Davis and Liston Davis, III who both live in Tallahassee and work at Florida A & M University children to do the same.

Like her commitment to her church, Sophia is a dedicated member of Alpha Kappa Sorority, Inc. having made her commitment to the sorority as a junior at Claflin University. She is a Golden life member having served faithfully for 57 years in a number of positions and on a number of committees. That spirit of working for the betterment of God's world is the same attitude of this woman of God who serves wherever she can.

Sophia holds membership in the Retired Teachers' Association, the Claflin University Alumni Association, and the Wilson High School Alumni Association.

But and there always is one: But despite all she has done and does, she is a lover of animals and like her students who love her dearly, they love her dearly, too.