In 2013, the First Ladies Garden was approved by the Board of Trustees as a tribute to Leah Burks and to the other first ladies who have graciously served the University. With God’s blessing and the generosity of alumni and friends who love Harding, this dream is on its way to becoming a reality. The garden will feature five distinctive gardens showcasing the favorite flowers of our five first ladies and a Secret Garden, thus creating a stunning corridor connecting the front lawn to Legacy Park. Located between Shores and Stephens Halls, the garden is more than a beautification project. It creates green space and a place to remember, reflect and recognize those who have planted seeds in our lives and in the history of Harding. The garden will be a place of honor and offers an opportunity to tell stories about ordinary people who have done extraordinary things to honor God and their families. Dorothy Frances Gurney’s poem captures the spirit of the gardens.

*Kiss of the sun for pardon.*

*Song of the birds for mirth.*

*You’re closer to God’s heart in a garden Than any place on earth.*
First Ladies Garden

This garden is not limited to only Harding first ladies. In every life, there is a mother, grandmother, aunt or a special woman who made a difference. Through her sacrifices and encouragement, many of us have had the opportunity for a Christian education at Harding. Throughout the garden and on the **Legacy Wall of Honor**, these extraordinary women will be remembered and honored. In addition to **Worthy Women** and **Women of Distinction**, other walls will recognize parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, professors, graduates and other special people.

A matching gift challenge has been issued for $150,000 to help us reach our goal. Naming opportunities start at $1,000 for a 4 inch by 12 inch brushed stainless steel plaque on the **Legacy Wall of Honor**. All naming gifts may be paid across 60 months, which makes this project very affordable for less than $20 a month. You may become a friend of the garden for a gift of $100 or a sustainer of the garden for $250. A complete list of giving opportunities is listed on the back page.

**Description**

While honoring Harding’s five first ladies, we are also working with Searcy Parks and Recreation Department, Searcy High School’s EAST Initiative, and the Arkansas Department of Education in a project called **“A Walk Through History.”** EAST (Environmental and Spatial Technology Inc.) is unlike any other model in modern education. It is a project-based, service-learning oriented program that provides students with high-end technology available in the most progressive fields in the world. At its heart, EAST is a coordinated effort to provide today’s students with an educational atmosphere that allows them to gain insight into their own abilities to acquire and use information, solve problems and develop valuable experience.

The project is a trail that features 16 historic properties, many of which have existed for more than 100 years and includes Harding’s campus as a prominent location. Citizens and visitors will be able to access an interactive
story map of the properties by scanning the quick response (QR) code embedded in the permanent signage allowing them to take their own walk through history. In January 2013, the project was started by Searcy EAST following a visit by Arkansan Becky Comet, a former contestant on NBC's “The Biggest Loser.” Based on her message of health and fitness, EAST students developed the idea of a trail winding through the historic district of Searcy and Harding’s campus. In 2013, EAST at Searcy High School was awarded $7,853.06 in grant monies from the EAST Beyond the Bell Grant to encourage healthy lifestyles and promote the history of Searcy, Arkansas, at the same time. Searcy High School students partially completed this project and have requested Harding University’s expertise in making this dream a reality. Our communication and video works departments will be working with them and Searcy Parks and Recreation to create an interactive website that links the sites through QR codes to historical facts, fitness challenge information and geocaching opportunities. The addition of the First Ladies Garden adds another dimension to the expansion of the Ganus Athletic Center and Rhodes Field House for additional wellness and recreational initiatives while increasing our green space.

The garden will feature five distinct gardens, a colonnade, a water feature with a sculpture, and 10 benches and will replace an asphalt street with additional green space for the enjoyment of our students and community. An outdoor classroom will offer a permanent location for classes, devotionals and other events. The colonnade will be available for a fee for weddings and other special events as revenue source for maintaining the garden. In our partnership with the city of Searcy and White County, we will be sharing a greenhouse and ordering plants which will be used around Searcy’s historic courthouse in conjunction with Searcy’s Main Street initiative. This partnership allows us to capitalize on our buying power and increase our beautification efforts.
First Ladies Garden
Giving and naming opportunities

Colonnade: $150,000 (purchased)
Water feature: $100,000 (purchased)
Legacy Walk: $100,000
Outdoor classroom: $50,000 (purchased)
Sculpture: $50,000 (purchased)
Secret Garden: $50,000

Gardens named for each first lady
Woodson Harding Armstrong: $25,000
Sallie Hockaday Benson: $25,000
Louise Nicholas Ganus: $25,000 (purchased)
Leah Gentry Burks: $25,000 (purchased)
Ann Hutson McLarty: $25,000 (purchased)

Bench: $5,000
Sandstone pavers 18 inches by 24 inches with name and verse: $2,500

Legacy Walls of Honor
Located south of the gardens near Shores and Pryor Hall, the Legacy Walls of Honor lead into a Secret Garden. Nestled on a brick wall with black wrought iron, Legacy Walls of Honor serve as a place of tribute to women and others whose lives tell their Harding story. Scriptures flank the headings to honor parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, professors, graduates and other special people.

Brick wall tribute to individual women: $15,000
4 feet by 3 feet plaque positioned on a 10-feet-wide by 7-feet-tall brick wall
(15 walls, one purchased)

4 inches by 12 inches brushed stainless plaque
Worthy Women: $1,000
Women of Distinction: $1,000
Parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, professors, graduates and others: $1,000

Sustainers of the garden: $250
Friends of the garden: $100

All gifts are tax-deductible.
Gifts may be made over five years.
For more information, contact Liz Howell at lhowell@harding.edu or 800-477-4312, ext. 1.