

Growing a Legacy - Maggie Hollis' Love for Roses Lives On

For more than 25 years, visitors strolling through the heirloom rose section of the K-State Gardens have unknowingly benefited from the careful hands of Maggie Hollis. Now, the retired schoolteacher and lifelong gardener is ensuring those roses will continue to flourish for generations to come.

Hollis, 72, has included a \$500,000 bequest to the K-State Gardens in her will to support the heirloom rose section of the garden, an area she has personally helped care for during decades of volunteer service. The gift will fund new plantings, maintenance of existing varieties and educational programs that teach visitors about the history and care of roses.

For Hollis, the gift reflects a lifelong connection to gardening that began during her childhood. She grew up on a small farm outside of Manhattan, where gardening was a regular part of family life. Her mother maintained a large vegetable garden, but it was her grandmother's flowers that left the biggest impression. Her grandmother's backyard was filled with peonies and irises, but she was best known for her roses. Hollis spent many afternoons learning how to care for the plants at her grandmother's side.

Those early experiences shaped a passion that stayed with Hollis throughout her life. She later spent 35 years teaching high school English and even incorporated gardening into her work with students by helping establish a school garden that provided hands on learning opportunities. After retiring, Hollis looked for ways to stay active and connected to the community. She began volunteering at the K-State Gardens, where she quickly found a new purpose.

"Some people spend retirement traveling the world, but I've found my paradise right here," Hollis said. "Volunteering at the K-State Gardens gives me purpose and keeps me connected to my community."

Scott Elwain said volunteers like Hollis play a vital role in the garden's success. "The K-State Gardens wouldn't be what they are today without the dedication of volunteers like Maggie," Elwain said. "Their time, energy, and expertise help keep this place growing – literally and figuratively. Maggie's story is a reminder that one person's passion can leave a lasting impact."

As the K-State Gardens continue to grow and serve the community, Hollis' story highlights the lasting difference volunteers can make. Community members interested in getting involved are encouraged to sign up to become a garden volunteer. Through decades of service and a generous gift that will support the gardens for years to come, Hollis has helped ensure the roses she loves will continue blooming for future visitors.