

'Great Floridians' include Tallahasseeans

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Two Tallahassee residents — Bill Gunter and Dr. Charlotte Maguire — are among the recipients of an honor recognizing their lifetime of contributions to the state of Florida, its progress and prosperity.

They and 21 others from a variety of professions have been named Great Floridians. The distinction is officially conferred by the state after a committee composed of representatives from the Governor's Office, Cabinet members, Senate President, House Speaker and Secretary of State nominates deserving residents.

Following the nomination process, the Secretary of State selects no fewer than two nominees to be officially named Great Floridians.

Regarded as the “Mother of the FSU Medical School,” Dr. Maguire grew up in Orlando and earned her medical degree in 1944 from the University of Arkansas, where she was the only woman in her class.

During her groundbreaking career, she was a delegate to the World Health Conference in London in 1957, and was the very first assistant secretary of the former Department of Health & Rehabilitative Services when it was formed in 1969.

“I didn't go to FSU, but there's a long history,” she said of the accomplishment she's most proud of. “I was on the committee to start the medical school at the University of Florida back in the 1940s and that's how I got the idea, so I have got two med schools.”

“I had 50 years in active practice and membership in the American Medical Association,” she noted.

Gunter is chairman of Rogers, Gunter, Vaughn Insurance. During his time in the Florida Senate (1966-1972), he co-sponsored Florida's “Government in the Sunshine” law, supported stronger laws for land and water management, and was an advocate for solar energy research.



“It was one of real pride,” Gunter said of how he felt to hear his selection as a Great Floridian. “I looked into it and saw that some of my heroes in public service had already been honored.”

“It was certainly a thrill to be numbered among that group,” he added.

Gunter served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1973 to 1975. While Florida’s insurance commissioner, treasurer and fire marshal (1976-1988), he was named “Most Effective Insurance Commissioner in the United States” by the National Insurance Consumers Organization.

Gunter instituted his department’s first efforts to fight insurance fraud, revised the state’s no-fault insurance laws, and pushed for enforcement of excess profits regulation that resulted in insurers refunding money to their policyholders.