



PHOTO COURTESY OF DWIGHT & CONNIE FITCH

“The First Musical Couple of New Orleans”

## Dwight and Connie Fitch unveil a new foundation for musicians

By Anita Oubre

When Connie Whitfield and Dwight Fitch first met at a St. Mary’s Academy talent show back in the late 1960s, little did they know that they would become a couple for the next 50-plus years as well as a team. A team that would not only

find them singing and performing together for more than half a century, but also one that would start a foundation whose mission would provide music services for the bereaved, burial assistance for indigent musicians in underserved communities and support for music education.

“It takes three to make a marriage successful,” Dwight stressed, adding, “With God being first and then come the husband and wife.” Both agreed that “God is the glue that makes the marriage stick.” To celebrate their long union and make it especially memorable, the couple renewed their vows and gifted the foundation to the community on their Golden Anniversary.

Connie explained the reasons behind the Fitchfield Foundation’s mission. “We are in the trenches of funerals here in New Orleans and we wanted to do this for our musicians,” she said. “Our children have encouraged us and this is something that we had been wanting to establish. The pandemic gave us the time to settle down and build our foundation.”

Dwight reiterated, “We may perform at thirty to forty funerals a year. There is a need for bereavement service in any denomination. We want to help with the music side of bereavement, especially when people cannot afford the cost associated with it.” He emphasized that this calling brings him “great joy” but he cannot possibly service each funeral to which he is called.

And so, to fill that gap, he explained, “We want to employ other musicians to play for funerals. Most of the musicians I work with love what they do but they need to make a living as well, and this will be another aspect of the foundation - providing employment opportunities.”

Connie added that, “Having musicians on hand to comfort the surviving family and friends through song and music is a big part of the healing process.” She and Dwight both know firsthand how music comforted them during the passing of their own loved ones.

“I have been there,” Connie said. “We have been seated in those seats when we lost Dwight’s father; when we lost my mother, my brother, Dwight’s brother and my dad. To have the musicians comfort and uplift you is a glorious feeling. Funerals are a big part of our culture. During this time, it gives the family a

release. When you can celebrate a life in this way, it helps in the grieving process,” she emphasized.

The Fitchfield Foundation will also assist in supporting the educational aspects of the music business. Being able to provide this valuable service is important, as Dwight described countless instances in which musicians are taken advantage of because “they were not making informed decisions.” The foundation’s vision includes providing scholarships to promising musicians, as well as hosting workshops that will focus on being able to not only read a contract, but to understand the language of the contract and the importance of copywriting and publishing original musical works.

“Generally, down South things are a little bit slower,” Dwight said. “A lot of our musicians leave home to expand and we want them to have a fair shot to grow here in New Orleans.”

The couple further envisions acquiring funeral property that will cater specifically to indigent musicians. Connie stresses that, “Everyone deserves a dignified funeral and it is our hope that, through the foundation, this wish will be carried out.” She emphasizes the fact that, for as many musicians who are successful, there are just as many who perform on the streets as well as those who go from gig to gig without any type of insurance.

And so, as this dedicated and empathetic couple works to get the word out and build their foundation, they will continue to foster their

music ministry and share their love and passion for Christ. They will also keep busy as they await the much-anticipated October 2021 return of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival for which they have scouted and coordinated music for the Gospel Tent for many years. Serving the community that they love through music will continue to drive Dwight and Connie Fitch as they nurture, educate and give dignity to those who deserve it.

To order the Fitches’ Christmas CD or their other CDs go to [www.connieand-dwight.org](http://www.connieand-dwight.org). For more information on how to donate to the Fitchfield Foundation or for other sponsorship opportunities, please contact Dwight Fitch at (504) 239-9571.



Councilman Jared Brossett, Dwight Fitch, Judge Ellen Hazeur, and Connie Fitch



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