



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Blake Center for Faith and Freedom Hosts First Event**

*An evening to honor Helen and Pres Blake for their vision and kindness*

Somers, CT. — On May 20, Hillsdale College’s Blake Center for Faith and Freedom held its first event to honor the center’s namesakes, Prestley and Helen Blake. The Blakes donated the buildings and acreage to Hillsdale College in 2019. This included their home, an exterior replica of Monticello, Thomas Jefferson’s renowned Virginia house.

“It has been an honor to fulfill Helen and Pres’s vision for their legacy to their community,” said Rich Péwé, Hillsdale College’s vice president for administration. “We have promised to be good stewards of their estate and to honor their wishes for the Blake Center. We only wish Pres could be here to see it all come together.”

In addition, Dr. and Mrs. Raúl and Olga Chao will be honored for their generous gift of the Monticello House’s new Jefferson Library. The library is a collection of rare and antique books according to the same system Thomas Jefferson would have used in his own Monticello. The gift includes more than 200 books dating back as far as the 17th century and written in several languages, including English, Latin, and French.

“The gift of the Jefferson Library reveals a great love for enduring things,” said Dr. Larry P. Arnn, president of Hillsdale College. “There are few places where these books will be so cherished.”

In hosting the event, Hillsdale College also contracted with local vendors wherever possible, including catering, photography, and valet services, among others. To make the event easier and quieter in the neighborhood, it will be held in a tent located on a discreet portion of the property, and all parking will be valet and behind the Monticello House so as not to obstruct traffic or roads.

To maintain the loveliness of the estate, Hillsdale College has worked with special care to adjust certain areas of the property to better suit the Blake Center’s needs. Whenever feasible, the college has hired local painters, cleaning companies, and others to undertake conversion projects. Future plans include building additional parking and adding driveway lighting, among others.

**About Hillsdale College**

Hillsdale College is an independent liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 5.6 million. For more information, visit [hillsdale.edu](http://hillsdale.edu).

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