

Pensacola News Journal, Feb. 16, 2012 –

Pensacola Christian College founder and President Arlin Horton plans to retire May 10.

The retirement comes after 60 years of service in the Pensacola area by Horton and his wife, Beka, and has grown to include the ministries of Pensacola Christian Academy, Camp o' the Pines, Sports Center Day Camp, and WPCS Rejoice Radio.



In a new release announcing Horton's retirement, PCC touted the Hortons' work.

"Their impact extends worldwide through Pensacola Christian College and A Beka Book, a leading textbook supplier for Christian schools and homeschools," the news release said.

"The Hortons are recognized as respected pioneers in Christian education," the news release said. "Their accomplishments have benefited hundreds of thousands of people worldwide.

"Thousands come to Pensacola each year for college education, Christian school training, or campus events. Dr. and Mrs. Horton are honored and respected by the Pensacola Christian College family as they begin their retirement."

Dr. Troy Shoemaker has been appointed as the next president of Pensacola Christian College. He has more than 22 years of experience at both Pensacola Christian Academy and Pensacola Christian College.

Dr. and Mrs. Horton are well known for serving area families by providing opportunities for growth and enrichment through camps, day school, and college.

Pensacola News Journal, Feb. 17, 2012, by Katie McFarland –

Dr. Arlin Horton and his wife, Rebekah, the devoted couple who built Pensacola Christian College, Pensacola Christian Academy and a Christian publishing company into national powerhouses in religious education as well as one of the area's most potent economic forces, will retire at the end of the school year.

Dr. Horton, 83, the college's president, and his wife, who is 82 and the senior vice president, announced Thursday that they will step down the day after May graduation at the college they grew from 100 students in 1974 to 3,800 students last fall.



The Hortons' names have been synonymous with Christian education in Pensacola since they moved here in 1952 at the request of a local group that wanted to start a Christian school.

Pensacola Christian College Inc. brought in more than \$84.4 million in revenue in 2009-10 and had expenses of \$72.8 million, according to the most recent publicly filed nonprofit annual reports.

But the two leaders, married 61 years, have remained exceedingly private, loathe to foist their beliefs on the community and content to carry out their life's dream.

"It's the end of an era for us, but we're so grateful to have had Dr. Horton's leadership for so long," Phyllis Rand, PCC's dean of education, said Thursday.

Troy Shoemaker, PCC's vice president for academic affairs, will become president of the college on May 10. A 1989 graduate of the college and 16-year administrator at the academy, he was unanimously chosen by the college's board of trustees.

Horton told PCC students on Feb. 7 that he and his wife started thinking about retirement in spring 2011. The couple were not available for comment Thursday.

In a rare interview 11 years ago, Arlin Horton spoke of the success of the academic institutions and the publishing company.

"The Lord has been very good to us," he said. "We are amazed. No one is more amazed than we are. We never expected it."

The news of the Hortons' retirement was a surprise to a number of local people who cannot imagine Pensacola Christian without them in charge.

"They have been great worldwide ambassadors for Escambia County," said Grover Robinson IV, Escambia County commissioner for District 4, in which PCC is located. "People come from all over the world to Pensacola, Fla., to be a part of their institution. It's amazing."

In 1954, the Hortons opened Pensacola Christian Grade School with 35 kindergartners through second-graders in a three-classroom building on Avery Street, near Baptist Hospital.

The school took off, with a grade added every year and more and more children attending.

In 1972, the Hortons opened A Beka Book, named after Rebekah Horton. It has grown into the world's largest Christian textbook publisher, supplying textbooks, curriculum and teaching materials to more than 10,000 Christian schools and more than 100,000 children who are home-schooled.

In 1974, the Hortons founded the college at Interstate 10 and Brent Lane. The main, 65-acre campus, with buildings valued at \$300 million, now has students from all 50 states and 70 countries, recruited mainly from Independent Baptist churches, Christian schools, and home-schooling families.

"We started praying about it and thinking about it, and we felt the Lord led us to start a college, so we responded to that," Arlin Horton said in the 2001 interview.

In 1995, the new, \$16 million, 240,000-square-foot school — renamed Pensacola Christian Academy — was opened at Old Palafox Highway and Brent Lane. In kindergarten through 12th grade, there are 2,265 students.

For 20 years, the Pensacola architectural firm of Strobel & Hunter has had a part in helping the Hortons literally design an institution.

"You couldn't ask for better clients to work with," partner Eddie Hunter said. "They've provided educational opportunities for students on campus and everywhere through home-schooling. I've grown to have a lot of respect for them."

Hunter said his favorite collaboration with the Hortons was in creating the Crowne Center, a \$74 million, 297,000-square-foot masterpiece at the college's entrance. Seven years in the making, the Crowne Center is used as a chapel, auditorium, concert venue, classroom and theater with a two-story, revolving stage platform.

Hunter also recalled Rebekah Horton picking bright colors, skylights and windows to make the academy a fun place for children to learn.

A year after the Hortons moved to Pensacola, they also created Camp O' the Pines, a Christian overnight summer camp in northern Escambia County. Amy Glenn, the college's communications director, said there are second- and third-generation campers at the camp.

"We call Dr. Horton a man of vision," said Rand, who joined the Pensacola Christian Academy faculty in 1969 and later started teaching at the college. "Dr. Horton comes up with a plan, and most of us sit back and say, 'Are you kidding?' But then it happens. It's so exciting to be a part of it."

Joel Mullenix, vice president and executive assistant to the president, said many students at a recent college basketball game clamored to get a photo with Horton.

"I think there's a new realization among the students that they've been part of a special student body that has attended the school while the founder is still president," said Mullenix, who started at the school the day it opened.

"Dr. Horton is a man of great vision who can bring vision to fruition."

About the Hortons...

Arlin Horton, 83

Rebekah Horton, 82

Came to Pensacola in 1952 to create a Christian school.

» 1953: Founded Camp O' the Pines.

» 1954: Founded Pensacola Christian Grade School (now Pensacola Christian Academy).

» 1974: Founded Pensacola Christian College.

» 1998: Founded Pensacola Theological Seminary.

» 1972: Founded A Beka Book, Christian textbook and teaching material publisher.

» Also created WPCS Rejoice Radio, 89.5 FM; Sports Center Day Camp; Teen Extreme Youth Camp; Joyful Life Bible Study and Sunday School Ministries; and three annual clinics to provide continuing education to Christian educators.