

## FIRST LADY

## Anne Davis

As the managing partner of the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), attorney Anne Davis works with local environmental nonprofits and leaders to help protect and preserve the natural resources of Tennessee. From cleaning up waterways to figuring out proper storage for coal ash, SELC is focused on our state's dirtiest issues. Here, the soon-to-be outgoing First Lady of Nashville gives us a glimpse of the work being done by this important organization. —Erin Byers Murray

**Age:** 59

**Ground work:** Founded 30 years ago, SELC is a nonprofit law and policy organization that works to protect the environment in six Southern states (Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama). Davis was tapped to open the Tennessee office in 2011. "Having people on the ground enables us to be more effective because we know the partner groups or environmental groups, we know the regulators, and we know what the issues are early on," she says. "We can leverage the whole expertise of our organization to address the problems here." She also notes that they are funded completely by private donations from foundations, families, and individuals. "We don't get any funding from the government, we don't get any funding from corporations," she adds, so every little bit helps. "If people think we're doing a good job, we'd be honored to have their financial support."

**Dirty job:** During a recent partnership with the Harpeth River Watershed Association, SELC sent letters to three sewage treatment plants that sit along—and discharge into—the river in

and around Franklin. "It's a procedure under the Clean Water Act where we send a letter saying we found these violations and if you don't clean them up, we are going to file suit against you," says Davis. "Two of the small plants came to us and said, 'We want to clean up our act, can you help us out?' And we did." That solution was much better than litigating, she adds. "It ended with an agreement by these groups not only to clean up their operations but also to contribute some money and engage in a study of the river."

**Home stretch:** Besides her work with SELC, Davis has been a tireless supporter of her husband, Mayor Karl Dean, who will exit the office later this year. As for what she'll miss most about her role as the First Lady of Nashville, Davis says, "it's been really fun to see how much Karl has enjoyed doing it and what he's been able to accomplish. That's been the best part of it for me." Along the way, she adds, "I've met a lot of people who are doing great things in Nashville, and I've learned a lot more than I knew about what the [city's] needs are. There's good work going on both in the public sector and the private sector here."



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