



Proclamation

WHEREAS, William James is 100 years old on January 1, 2021; and

WHEREAS, he lived always by the biblical tenet taught to him by his mother “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” and says that anything he has accomplished has been because of the blessings of the Lord; and

WHEREAS, he was just a young boy when his father died and, although blessed with a keen mind, he left school to help support his mother and three younger siblings; and

WHEREAS, he did not attend a Marion County high school himself, but he started work as a custodian at Howard High School in 1954 and retired in 1986 after 27 years of service to Marion County Public Schools with the distinction of being the first black custodial supervisor overseeing 17 different schools; and

WHEREAS, he was a valued school employee, friend and mentor to countless students and, perhaps inadvertently, an important figure in the county’s school integration in the 1960’s when his easy rapport with students was a valuable asset to help the first black students to attend North Marion High School, and even though there was trouble and racial discord, for William, the blessing of seeing black and white students under one roof was one he had prayed for; and

WHEREAS, as a respected member of the community, William has received numerous plaques and awards, including being an honorary deputy of the Marion County Sheriff’s Office where he served on advisory boards and ministered to inmates at the county jail, was presented with the Frank Pinkston Humanitarian Award in 2003, the Legacy Pioneer Award in 2007, the “William James Start!” walking train on MLK Jr. Avenue dedicated to him by the City of Ocala in honor of his decades of contributions to the community, the book “Walking by Faith” about his life authored by Cynthia Wilson-Graham, and being honored as an inaugural inductee of the Legacy Park Community Service Recognition Program; and

WHEREAS, the achievement that pleases this Christian man the most is his attendance record at Mount Tabor AME Church where he was appointed secretary as a teenager, served as a steward, taught Sunday school and has been in the congregation for nearly every service for more than 70 years; and

WHEREAS, William is always gracious with a natural warmth and a rolling laugh that does a heart good and is proud that he has never smoked, drank, cursed, been in a fight or been arrested.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Kent Guinn, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Ocala, Florida, do hereby proclaim that William James is a pioneer and an advocate of civil rights, and I urge all citizens to recognize the many ways that William James has demonstrated exemplary service that will resonate throughout our community for generations to come.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Ocala, Florida, to be affixed this 1st day of January 2021.

Kent Guinn, Mayor
City of Ocala

