

Mrs. Mary Jane Humphries

WHEREAS,

Mary Jane Humphries is a lifelong Detroiter born December 9, 1923 at Women's Hospital in Detroit, MI., to the late James William Leigh, Sr. and Pauline Lucy (Johnson) Leigh. Her parents' courtship culminated in marriage and from their union came 5 children of which Mary Jane is the eldest. Her parents named her Alice Cecilia but when, her second-cousin Laura remarked, "She looks like a Mary Jane," it gave her the name she would carry throughout her life. The Leigh's raised their family on Detroit's Westside on 24th Street. Mary Jane has fond memories of her neighbors including two sisters who had a marble fountain and Koi fishpond installed in their yard. Children could stop by and admire the exotic fish. Her home was often admired for her mother's beautiful rose garden. James W., her father was a porter at the Cadillac Hotel when one day the Police Commissioner, while visiting the hotel, asked her father and the other porters if any of them were interested in becoming a police officer. He accepted the invite and became one of the few Blacks hired on the force. The Leigh family attended St. Cyprians' Episcopal Church on Detroit's westside; **AND**

WHEREAS,

Mrs. Humphries is a product of Detroit Public Schools having graduated from "the Cass Technical High School"," as she affectionately calls it... "Detroit's best high school" she adds. Mary Jane completed the nursing curriculum while at Cass Tech but missed her last year when it was discovered she had tuberculosis requiring her to enter a sanitarium for a year to regain her health. There, she tutored other young people so they wouldn't fall behind in school. While away she remained friends with Andrew John Humphries, a young man she tutored while at Cass Tech. They would write each other and share stories. The day after graduation Andrew John left for the service. Mary Jane saved money and enrolled at City College, now known as Wayne State University, with the intention to study nursing. She also worked as an elevator operator at the renowned Hudson's Department Store in downtown Detroit. Later she worked at Uni-Royal. During the war she and her friends joined the United Service Organization, Inc. (USO) helping organize charitable and social events for servicemen, including a letter writing campaign; **AND**

WHEREAS,

Upon his return from the service, Andrew John and Mary Jane wed on February 15th at St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church. Father Malcolm Dade officiated the nuptials. Andrew John continued his collegiate studies at Wayne State and joined the Detroit Police Department. From their union came Derrick, Marcia, Dedria, Andrew Dwight, Paula (deceased), Alice, James, John, William, Pamela, Gregory, Mark (deceased), and Kimberly. All their children were christened and confirmed at St. Cyprian's as well as several of her 31 grandchildren and a host of her great-grandchildren; **AND**

WHEREAS,

Mrs. Humphries continues to be a pillar of light in her community. Every election she activates a phone list urging people to vote and emphasizing the importance of voting both sides of the ballot - for candidates and referendums. At the top of the list would be her dear friends and co-organizers Wesley Duggan (deceased) and Alma Bell, wife

of the late Honorable Judge Edward Bell. Along the way Mrs. Humphries ran for Detroit City Council. Despite an unsuccessful race she turned her energy towards helping her good friend Erma L. Henderson run for Council becoming the first African American woman Councilmember and City Council President. The legacy of supporting strong women on Council reached a new generation, whereas Mrs. Humphries was a friend, confidante and avid supporter to the late Honorable Queen Mother JoAnn Watson. Others would also benefit from her prowess, as she was essential to the political success of the late Honorable Judge Geraldine Bledsoe Ford, The Honorable retired Judge Craig Strong, The Honorable Circuit Court Judge Bruce Marrow, The Honorable 36th District Court Judge Alicia Jones-Coleman, The Honorable 36th District Court Judge Adrienne Hinnant-Johnson, and most notably her beloved daughter the late Honorable Judge Paula G. Humphries. Most elected officials lease campaign offices, but then there's Mother Humphries' dining room where campaign literature, maps of Detroit voting precincts, and clipboards are constant fixtures; **AND**

WHEREAS,

When her dear friend Catherine Blackwell decided to open a school, Mary Jane was there by her side helping her petition the Detroit School Board for support. Advocating for education is a lifelong passion of Mrs. Humphries. For decades she served on the Parent-Teacher Association at Chadsey High School in Detroit. She also volunteered at private and parochial schools in her community reading books to students, serving as a teacher's aide and donating books and school supplies. In 2016, Detroit Public Schools Community District and the school leadership under the direction of former Principal Lisa Billups renamed the library at Priest Elementary Middle School in Mrs. Humphries' honor. While many may describe activism as a grand effort impacting hundreds or thousands, ask anyone who grew up in the Midwest Tireman neighborhood and they will describe Mrs. Humphries as a community activist. She served as a Block Club captain and on the Executive Board of the Midwest Civic Council for decades with Mrs. Rebecca Lockridge. Together they advocated for park maintenance, installation of stop signs, and organized efforts to support small businesses, including Mr. Hughley's Barbershop and Finley's Beauty shop on Tireman. She is a member of the Westsiders Association, First Congressional District. She serves as the scholarship steward for the James W. Leigh Endowment at Wayne State University providing an annual scholarship to students in the School of Social Work. She and her children also chartered the Andrew and Mary Jane Humphries Foundation committed to supporting civic and education initiatives in Detroit; **AND**

WHEREAS,

She is a lifelong member of St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church. She was a member of the Alter Guild and vestry under the leadership of Father Donald Mckenzie Lutus and the Episcopal Church Women (ECW) under the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan. She gave of her time, talent, and treasure. She is now affiliated with All Saints Episcopal Church where The Reverend Anthony Estes is the Rector, and where she will continue to be of service; **AND**

WHEREAS,

The year 2023 marks the centennial birthday for Mary Jane Humphries. When asked about her greatest accomplishment, she shared, “it’s knowing that the Lord loves me and that His love comes through me as I follow His commandments and love and serve others.” She wants everyone to know that the Lord has been good to her, and every day she looks for opportunities to be of service to her family and community. “Keeping moving forward”, is one of the many adages she often shares. And, when she says, “I’ll be praying for you”, believe it and know that she is someone who can get a prayer through. Whether it’s sending a card or note in mail, or a phone call or text to let you know she’s thinking about you, Mrs. Humphries is someone who cares deeply. **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED,

That on this day, Saturday, December 9, 2023, **President Pro Tempore James E. Tate, Jr.**, and the entire **Detroit City Council**, hereby present this testimonial resolution as an expression of gratitude and esteem in honor of Mary Jane Humphries’ 100th birthday, on behalf of the residents of the City of Detroit, to honor the legacy she continues to sow in the City of Detroit and beyond.