



City of Winston-Salem
North Carolina
27102

COUNCIL MEMBER
EAST WARD

October 11, 2019

Mr. William Royston
Recreation and Parks Director
City of Winston-Salem
PO Box 2511
Winston-Salem, NC 27102

Dear Mr. Royston:

I want to recommend to the Recreation and Parks Commission that the 14th Street Recreation Center be renamed to the Minnie Lee Davis Harris Recreation Center. Mrs. Harris was a pioneer Recreation Center Director, being the first African American female in our recreation department.

Mrs. Minnie Davis Harris was born August 13, 1918 in Stokes County. She completed her high school education at Atkins High School and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Education in 1938 from Winston-Salem Teachers College, now Winston-Salem State University. For several years, she taught school in the Harnett and Rockingham County school systems.

Mrs. Harris joined the Winston-Salem Recreation staff in 1948, and became the first African American female Recreation Center Director in 1950. She built a recreation program for all ages from scratch at the Skyland Recreation Center, and organized the Skyland Senior Citizen's Club that recently celebrated its 68th anniversary.

Mrs. Harris served at Skyland Recreation Center for 20 years before transferring to the new 14th Street Center, built in 1967. Joe White, the recreation director at the time, said Mrs. Harris was "a fine, dedicated employee with an outstanding attitude". She served as a Recreation Center Director from 1950 to 1971.

Mrs. Harris instilled quality values and expectations of achievement in the lives of the 1000's of children and adults who came to the Skyland and 14th Street Recreation Centers. She worked with the neighborhood schools, churches, and residents to find ways to solve some of the more critical life challenges and situations. Many of the youth considered her a living angel, especially on the after school days when she served fried potatoes with onions, made sure homework was completed, and supervised instruction in chess and ping-pong.

It is befitting that the spirit of her "over and above" dedicated service, well-seasoned with love and respect, be memorialized at the 14th Street Recreation Center.

Sincerely,

Annette Scippio
East Ward, Council member