

FEBRUARY 2025

WASHINGTON PARK ROCHELLE HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC.

NEWS BULLETIN

Albertha Whittley-Tabron
Alice Speed
Angela Terrell Walker
Annie Day Henry
Arnold L. Washington
Asonja Corbett
Audrey Figgs
Autry Denson
Betty Stancil Bailey
Beverly Boatwright
Carolynne Patterson Mather
Clarence Childs
Clifford L. Johnson
Constance Porter Fennell

David Wood
Debbie J. Cobb
Delores Pickett Patterson
Diane Robinson
Dolores Hamilton
Doretha Brooks
Earl Kagler
Eddie Lake, Pastor
Earlene Coney
Eugene Williams
Frank Porter
Gloria Porter Perkins
Gwendolyn Sanders
Helen Brown

Jacqueline Speed
James Griffin
Jesse Bryant
Johnny Stancil
Lynnette Giles Canady
Mary W. Forte
Joseph Garvin
Laddie Russell
Laurastine King
M. Patricia Parks
Mamie Stancil Cox
Rhonda Taylor Norman

Robert Hamilton
Rodney Giles
Ronald Thompkins
Rosa Hughes
Dr. S. Daniel Mobley
Sharyn K. Cole
Shirley Johnson
Terry Coney
Thaddeus Speed
Trudy Underwood Hayes
Willer Rean Ward
Yvonne Roberts

Paying toward Life Membership : Barbara Harrison
Charlene R. Brinson



Let's Reunite—Meet and Greet—Friday, June 13, 2025 Coleman Bush Building

Scholarship Awards Ceremony—Saturday, June 14, 2025 Polk Museum of Art

President's Message

Hello February—the month of love, warmth, and hope!

We are delighted to announce that our Soul Food Sunday Fundraiser was a huge success, with a sell-out crowd! The funds we raised will tremendously enhance our 2025 scholarship program. During January, we elected new officers, and I am honored to serve another term as your president. Please know that I am grateful for the opportunity to continue serving and will always give my best to each of you.

We have confirmed our June 2025 activities, which will include a Meet and Greet Celebration and our Annual Scholarship Awards Ceremony, followed by food and entertainment. We will also worship together on Sunday, June 15. More information will follow.

I encourage you to send me any news of interest for the newsletter, as well as any new addresses to add to the email list. Enjoy your reading and be sure to share your newsletter with others.

Respectfully,

Beverly Boatwright



BE MY VALENTINE

In Tribute to:
Mrs. Essie Mae Bryant Jenkins

Our love goes out to

Mrs. Essie Jenkins who taught first and second grades at Rochelle from 1955 to 1969. She was a member of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. Mrs. Jenkins stated that the thing she was most proud of was the “ success of many of her students.

She was married to Mr. Herman Jenkins, a WWII Veteran and a self-taught photographer who served our community well. Jenkins operated a photography business for decades. Many of us may also remember him for working and dressing the windows at the downtown Lakeland Empire Store.

FRED MOORE

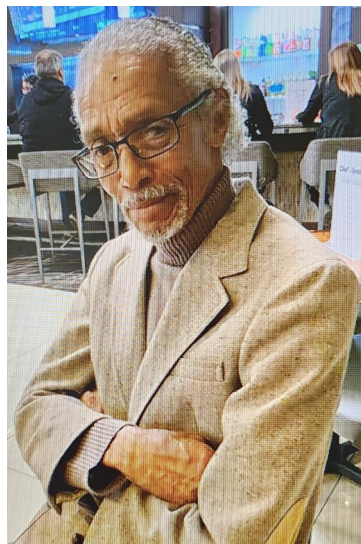
CLASS OF 1954

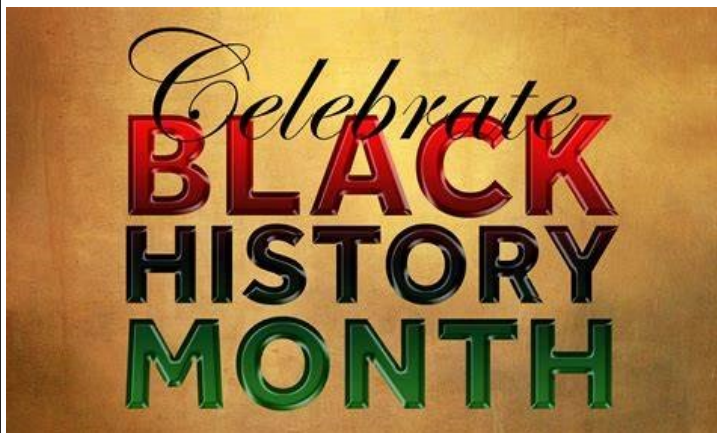


Fredrick D. Moore was valedictorian of the Rochelle Class of 1954. He spent his career working as a Mechanical Engineer. He retired in 2001. Today, Fred continues to live in Lakeland and still enjoys his hobby of photography; he actually still does some drawings for local contractors. Fred, who is 88, spends his time with his devoted wife, Sharon and enjoys hanging out with family and friends.



FRED AT AGE 16





Black History Month 2014

Our Washington Park founding President, Madalynne Brooks, along with Gladys Leggett were honored by placing their photos on a City of Lakeland bus.

The bus tour around Lakeland began and ended at the Rochelle High School , now Rochelle School of the Arts.

LOCAL

Ladies of Legacy

Published 5:10 p.m. ET March 21, 2014



Gladys Leggett,94, (left) and the late Madalynne Brooks were honored with a bus dedication and tour for their hard work in the community during the civil rights movement at the Rochelle School of the Arts in Lakeland, FL on Friday March 21, 2014. Beverly Boatwright (daughter of Madalynne Brooks) speaks on her late mother's behalf.

The Ledger



"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Dr. M. L. King, Jr.

The
**STRUGGLE
CONTINUES**

[Historic Black Museum In Florida Spray Painted With Racist Graffiti](#)

The Historic Oviedo Colored Schools Museum in Seminole County was defaced with hate symbols. Officials said the museum's walls were spray-painted with the odious "SS lightning bolts" and other derogatory language. Click the link above or copy link to your browser for full story.



Thank you Dr. Frank Porter for bringing this article to our attention.

WASHINGTON PARK SCHOOL

In 1913 an estimated \$2,300 was spent to build a two-story schoolhouse dedicated to the education of Black children in Lakeland. . Most of the money used to build the school were civic funds. However, the money came from the Polk County Board of Public Instruction and not from the City of Lakeland. Coincidentally, in 1913 the City of Lakeland voted six to one to use a bond issue of \$50,000 to expand a previously constructed building and to erect a new school. Both schools served White students. The use of county and state funds rather than city municipal dollars for Black schools occurred since at least 1887, when the Polk County Board of Public Instruction paid \$200 to the Lakeland Colored School⁶⁸. This pattern of underfunding continued into the 1920s when Black education leaders petitioned the Polk County Board of Instruction to increase the length of the school year for Lakeland's Black schools. Polk County agreed to pay half of the costs to lengthen the school year if the City of Lakeland paid the remaining balance. The motion failed because the City of Lakeland refused to financially support lengthening the school year for Black schools in the city limits.

WHERE WE LIVED AND LEARNED TO KNOW

Research by Tosh Sergent

William A. Rochelle High School was a source of pride in Lakeland's Black community. Rochelle was located within Lakeland's northside Black community. It educated Black high school students from Lakeland and the surrounding area beginning in 1928 until its closure in the spring of 1969. In 1928, Washington Park School, Lakeland's only school for Black junior high school students, expanded to tenth grade and officially changed its name to Washington Park High School. Washington Park High School became the sixth all-Black segregated high school in Florida and the second all-Black segregated high school in Polk County. In 1949, Lakeland community leaders renamed Washington Park High School to William A. Rochelle High School in honor of prominent, 63 influential Black educator and Washington Park High School teacher and principal William A. Rochelle. Alumni remember their days at Rochelle with joy, affection, and gratitude. *"It was home. It was just being home with the people that I grew up with, the parents, the young people. It was home."* –Jewell (Harter) Jenkins, Class of 1952 "

"I went from my mom to Mrs. Brown [Mr. Frazier's 1st grade teacher] and my mom knew Mrs. Brown. So, it was like going from mom to mom...Everybody knew everybody...Going into Rochelle Elementary was like getting to see all of your friends every day that you saw at home. Some of the kids that I started school with in the first grade I'm still friends with now. Which is amazing cause I'll be 78 in October...The atmosphere was like going from home to home ." –Robert Frazier, Class of 1963

Rochelle High School provided Lakeland's Black high school students the opportunity to experience a wide array of activities. Mrs. Boatwright happily recalled "full spirited pep rallies where the whole gym would almost shake", "strong" football and basketball rivalries that would "sometimes extend beyond the game", elegant proms, and lively sock hops after home football games. Rochelle also offered a wide variety of after school clubs such as Future Farmers of America, Future Teachers of America, Dramatics Club, Future Homemakers of America, Future Business Leaders of America, and Projectionists Club. Alumni from Rochelle include doctors, lawyers, educators, professional football players, and musicians.

Alumni participants stated that Rochelle faculty were laser focused on ensuring student success after high school and adamantly encouraged all graduates to attend college. "They would openly say, 'You are a little chocolate child, and you got to be better than any White child just to be even, just to be thought of as equal. You have to be much better right off the bat...You cannot slack.' Going to college is something that was a part of that whole train of thought. They encouraged us to prepare ourselves for college and to be the best at it no matter what."

Willie Gibson expressed a tremendous amount of appreciation regarding how the Rochelle faculty prepared him for college. "After my freshman year of college when I came home, I went to the school (Rochelle) and thanked every teacher I had. Because when I got to Tennessee State, I knew more than I thought I knew." Rochelle conferred high school diplomas to Black students for 39 years until it closed after the 1969 school year and remaining students finished at Kathleen or Lakeland High School. The Rochelle campus closed for one year and was reopened as Rochelle Elementary. In the last decade of the 20th century, Rochelle Elementary was closed, the former Rochelle buildings were renovated, and in 1991 it reopened as Rochelle School of the Arts, the Rochelle Junior High School and Washington Park Elementary School buildings were demolished in the 1970s.

NEW LIFE MEMBERS FOR 2025

Leon McDougal
Mary Barnett
Etta Owens, Rev. Dr.
Reginald Lewis
Betty Stancil-Bailey
Mamie Stancil Cox
Johnny Stancil

Pledging Life Membership

Charlene Richardson-Brinson
Barbara Harrison



2025 Yearly Members

Annette Dunn	Andrea Gordon
Linda Davis	Gentle Barnett
Gentle Barnett	Emma Brooks
Veronica Rountree	Patricia Jones
Phillip Walker	Gina Gary
Inez King	Chrisandra Blow-Miller
Lawrence Sanders	Jessie Gregory
Annie Campbell	Mildred McMillon
Quentin D. Sanders	Louis Harrison
Mary Lawton McElrath	Wanda Gibson
Ruth Niblack	Larry Mitchell
Ron Coleman	Errol Brooks
Monica Holiday	Mildred Wilson
Valarie Niblack	Lynne Simpkins
Gloria Coleman	Valda Browning
Carl J. Willis	Helen Figgs
Frederick D. Moore	Robert Zackery
Betty Dawsey Major	

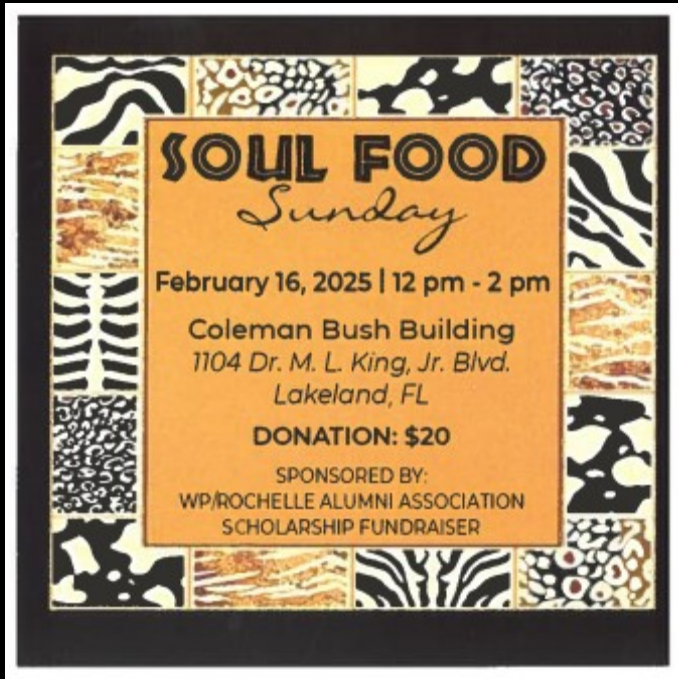


Beneath Our Wings

WP/Rochelle Alumni Association has taken the Rochelle School of the Arts Panthers under our wings. What an awesome school! They are our babies!

Rochelle School of the Arts offers concentrations in music (chorus, wind band, and orchestral strings), dance, theater, and visual arts. Recently it has begun to incorporate STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs into the arts concentrations. While there have been additional buildings added to the Rochelle campus, all former Rochelle High School buildings remain in use.

Tickets are sold out



Thank you alumni and friends
for your participation. This
event was a sell out!

Thank you
for your participation.

Drawing by Reginald Patterson, Jr.



Class Song 1963
Rochelle Senior High School
by Robert Frazier
Tune of "Climb Every Mountain"

Farewell Rochelle, Farewell to thee. We
will always love thee, class of '63. Fare-
well Rochelle, we will miss you so,
Though our days are through here, We
still love you so. To here we will leave all
the love that is there— That we'll give
and we'll give for so long as we live.
Farewell Rochelle, in our hearts you
know, That we will always love you And
we love you so.

Thank
you ❤️

2025

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MRS. YVONNE ROBERTS

IN HONOR OF DR. NERIAH ROBERTS

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