



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

# RESOLUTION

## HONORING THE LIFE OF DR. JAMES HENRY NEELY

**WHEREAS**, Dr. James Henry Neely was born in West Point, Mississippi on August 8, 1932 to the union of Robert and Missouri Neely. He departed this life on June 23, 2020 at the Baptist Memorial Hospital in Oxford, Mississippi; and

**WHEREAS**, He attended Mary Holmes College High School where he was the editor of the school newspaper, secretary of the senior class, president of the Athletic Club and member-at-large of the Student Council. He received his Bachelor's degree in 1955 from Kentucky State University, formerly Kentucky State College, in Frankfort, Kentucky with a major in chemistry and a minor in math and French; and

**WHEREAS**, He received his Doctor of Medicine degree in 1960 from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, TN. After graduation he entered the United States Air Force, where he earned the rank of Captain and served as a Flight Surgeon stationed in El Paso, Texas and in Belleville, Illinois; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1964, He relocated to Tupelo to set up his medical practice, upon the encouragement of the late Dr. Walter A. Zuber. He was the first African-American doctor to have full hospital privileges of admitting and treating patients at the North Mississippi Medical Center. He diligently served his community in medical practice for 35 years, until his retirement in 1999; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Neely was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity and a Life member of the NAACP. He held memberships in numerous other organizations, including The National Medical Association, The Black Business Association of Mississippi and the Henry Hampton Elks Lodge. In the 1970s, he served as a member of the Board of Directors of Community Development Foundation (CDF) and as a member of the Northside Beautification Committee, along with Mr. Ulysses Mayhorn and Mrs. W. A. Zuber. He served on the Park and Recreation Board as a representative of Ward 4. During his tenure on the Park and Recreation Board, he recommended that a Ceramic Class would be established at the Northside Multi-Purpose Center in the Park Hill Neighborhood. He recommended Nettie Young Davis to teach the Ceramic Class, which developed into a very successful venture and lasted about three years; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Neely's extensive Community and Civic involvement included Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boy Scouts of America, Tupelo UNCF, Good Samaritan Health Services and St. Paul Outreach Boys Home; and

**WHEREAS**, He was honored with numerous awards during the course of his notable career, including: Mississippi Medical and Surgical Award - Practitioner of the Year (1982) Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. Nu Sigma Omega Chapter - Distinguished Service Award Meharry Medical College Distinguished Service Award for 25 years of service (1985) The Black Business Association - Legend Award for Outstanding Community Service (1999) UNCF Tupelo Lee County Committee - Recognition Award for Outstanding Dedication and Leadership in the field of Medicine Magnolia Bar Association - Harriet Tubman Award (2001) The Committee for King Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.- Drum Major Award (2001); and

**WHEREAS**, a project that he was very proud of was the planting pink crepe myrtle trees along North Spring Street (between Jackson Street and Franklin Street) in Tupelo, which still bloom beautifully each year; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Neely was married to the former Elaine Kilgore of West Point for 66 years. He said that this was one of his greatest accomplishments.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, be it resolved that I, Jason L. Shelton, Mayor of the City of Tupelo, Mississippi, respectfully call upon all citizens to recognize the life and legacy of Dr. James Henry Neely for his notable contributions to medicine, civic organizations and the community.

This signed the 21<sup>st</sup> day of July in the year of 2020.

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JASON L. SHELTON, Mayor  
City of Tupelo, Mississippi