

PROCLAMATION

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF MRS. WYANETTA JOHNSON

WHEREAS, Mrs. Wyanetta Johnson, a beloved community leader, advocate, mentor, and matriarch, passed away on January 1, 2026, at the age of 86, leaving behind a profound and enduring legacy of service, justice, and compassion within the Village of Oak Park and the greater Oak Park and River Forest community; and

WHEREAS, born on April 18, 1939, in Wyatt, Missouri, and raised in the Charleston and Sikeston areas, Mrs. Johnson was shaped by a deep, rooted commitment to fairness and racial justice instilled by her family in a generation that preceded the Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Johnson and her husband, Forrest Johnson, moved to Oak Park in the early 1980s to be closer to their children and grandchildren, a move that would mark the beginning of more than four decades of tireless advocacy on behalf of children, families, and educators in Oak Park schools; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Johnson emerged as a pioneering Black leader in local education advocacy, dedicating her life to ensuring that all students, regardless of race, background, or circumstance, were treated with dignity, fairness, and afforded equitable access to opportunity; and

WHEREAS, she served with distinction as both President and Vice President of African American Parents for Purposeful Leadership in Education (APPLE), an organization that in the 1980s and 1990s maintained a presence in all Oak Park public schools and provided mentoring, tutoring, advocacy, and culturally affirming support to students and families; and

WHEREAS, through APPLE, Mrs. Johnson helped organize career days, Saturday School programs, parent seminars, overnight retreats, fashion and talent shows, and daily mentoring initiatives, often using her own financial resources to feed children, provide clothing, and support students in enrolling in postsecondary and vocational programs; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Johnson was a central force in advancing racial equity within Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200, playing a key role in advocating for the adoption of a racial equity policy, reforms to special education and discipline practices, and the expansion of access to high, status learning through the Freshman All Honors Curriculum; and

WHEREAS, known affectionately as "Grandma" to generations of students, Mrs. Johnson was widely regarded as a "powerhouse" advocate, small in stature yet mighty in presence, who spoke truth to power with courage, wisdom, and unwavering love for the community she served; and

WHEREAS, her influence extended beyond policy and programming, as she mentored students, counseled families, supported educators, guided emerging equity leaders, and inspired countless individuals through her generosity, integrity, and belief in the inherent worth of every child; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Johnson's legacy lives on through her children, grandchildren, great, grandchildren, and great, great, grandchildren, as well as through the many students, families, educators,

and community leaders whose lives were forever changed by her advocacy, including the establishment of a college scholarship in her name to benefit Oak Park and River Forest High School students; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Oak Park recognizes that many of the equity, centered practices, community engagement efforts, and commitments to justice present in our institutions today are rooted in the courageous and visionary work of Mrs. Wyanetta Johnson;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED by the President and Board of Trustees of the Village of Oak Park that we do hereby honor and celebrate the life, service, and extraordinary legacy of Mrs. Wyanetta Johnson, and express our deepest gratitude for her more than forty years of steadfast advocacy on behalf of children, families, educators, and the broader community; and

BE IT FURTHER PROCLAIMED that the Village of Oak Park extends its sincere condolences to the Johnson family and all who mourn her passing, and affirms its commitment to continuing the work of equity, justice, and inclusion that Mrs. Johnson so powerfully advanced throughout her life.

DATED this 27th day of January 2026.

Vicki Scaman, Village President

ATTEST

Christina M. Waters, Village Clerk