

Submitted by: Susan Burns, Vice President
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REQUEST FOR APPROVAL FOR THE NAMING OF THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK GARDEN

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve the honorific naming of the School of Social Work Garden as the *School of Social Work Maryann Mahaffey Memorial Garden* in recognition of Mahaffey's service to Wayne State University as a faculty member in the School of Social Work and her legacy of service to the community as a social worker, author, educator, civil rights activist, volunteer and political leader.

Background

Maryann Mahaffey, born on January 18, 1925, in Burlington, Iowa, empowered social change for over 60 years at the local, state, national and international levels; Mahaffey put into action her deep commitment to solving critical social issues. Holding steadfast in her ideals, she supported the most vulnerable of our citizens. She advocated for equal rights as Detroit City Council president for 12 years and as a council member for 32 years.

Honored in the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame, Mahaffey became a champion for women's rights, filing the precedent-setting lawsuit, which established a woman's right to run for office using her birth name, leading the fight to open the doors of the Detroit Athletic Club to women. She enacted an ordinance explaining and prohibiting the sexual harassment of city employees. As a Detroit City Council president and member, Mahaffey successfully collaborated with community residents and groups to ensure fairness in the allocation of community development block grant funds (directing funds to neighborhoods, not city departments), and enacted many ordinances protecting vulnerable people, including the homeless, children in daycare, homeowners facing eviction, and seniors facing utility shut-offs. In addition, she created the first-ever Disabilities Task Force, led by persons with disabilities.

There was also another legacy Mahaffey left: the hundreds of students and rising stars that the Councilwoman taught and mentored, including the late Detroit City Council Member and President Erma Henderson, the current Dean of the Wayne State University School of Social Work Sheryl Kubiak, and members of the WSU Board of Governors. In addition, Mahaffey worked as a faculty member in the Wayne State School of Social Work from 1965 to 1990, taught classes on methodology, community planning, and policy development, and supervised field placements for students in Metro Detroit.

Mahaffey died of leukemia at 81 years of age on July 27, 2006.