

RUSHVILLE, MARTINSVILLE PARTNER TO HONOR LIFE OF CAROL JENKINS- DAVIS

Rushville, Ind. – October 16, 2017 – Rushville Mayor Mike Pavey and Martinsville Mayor Shannon Kohl are partnering on two remembrance events celebrating the life of Carol Jenkins-Davis, a 21-year-old Rushville resident tragically killed in Martinsville nearly 50 years ago with a community park rededication ceremony in Rushville on Wednesday, November 1 and a memory stone dedication at Martinsville City Hall on Thursday, November 2.

According to Pavey, nearly 50 years ago on September 16, 1968, a beloved member of the Rushville community and 1965 Rushville High School graduate Jenkins-Davis was tragically and senselessly killed in Martinsville while she was selling encyclopedias door-to-door.

“At just 21 years old, most of Carol’s life lay ahead of her, filled with hopes and dreams never to be realized. Documents have shown she was murdered because she was African-American. Heartbreaking.

“In the ensuing years since her death, Carol’s mom, Elizabeth, and her father, Paul Davis, have worked to keep her memory alive while seeking to bring their daughter’s killer to justice. It took nearly 33 years before Carol’s killer was charged and only after an informant came forward having seen a cold case story about her murder. Incredibly, the key witness to solving this crime was the killer’s daughter.

“The killer – I won’t give space to his name – was arrested in 2002, was declared incompetent to stand trial and died two weeks later. His accomplice was never identified. What many don’t know is that the killer was not from Martinsville, but was only traveling through town that night.

“In life, opportunities come along to do the right thing. Sometimes, the right thing is a large action and sometimes it’s a small deed. If we are fortunate, doing the right thing also affords us the chance to make a difference in others’ lives,” Pavey said. “Making that difference can – and should – happen regardless of the years gone by.”

Pavey, who grew up blocks from the Davis family was vaguely aware of the details of Carol’s death and as a neighbor, tried to respectfully keep abreast of the developments in her case. Her story gained renewed attention in 2012 when journalist Sandra Chapman wrote *The Girl in the Yellow Scarf*, a comprehensive, cohesive account of Jenkins-Davis’ story and legacy.

As Pavey believes, sometimes situations have a way of aligning with destiny.

“The Community Park closest to Carol’s home where she grew up was already set for a redesign. At that point, as City leaders, we began to consider the park redesign as an opportunity to dedicate it in Carol’s memory. We wanted the redesigned park to be unique, reflective and educational. The integration of Carol’s story was the perfect fit at the perfect time as an appropriate tribute to her. Our redesigned park recognizes Carol’s life had value and her story will live as an opportunity to teach future generations the value of inclusion and diversity,” Pavey said.

Jenkins-Davis’ parents were very supportive and have been involved in the park’s planning and redesign. With the concept formalized this past February, Rushville’s City intern and Ball State Urban Planning student Nate Robert-eze helped coordinate the vision for the park while being respectful of Carol’s family.

“If anyone is asking, ‘why now’? My response is a quote from novelist and screenwriter Nicholas Sparks: ‘it is never too late to do the right thing.’ Carol’s life and what can be learned from her death make her memory

deserving. Her family's patience with the unthinkable, tragic crime and their commitment to and love for Carol make her recognition deserving. From a community perspective, telling Carol's story and the lessons we can teach future generations about her legacy make honoring Carol and partnering with Martinsville officials to recognize her the right thing to do.

"Shortly after deciding our plans for our park redesign, we learned of an effort happening in Martinsville to memorialize Carol's life. Mayor Kohl and I know each other and I have a great deal of respect for all she is accomplishing in her community. I reached out to her with the idea of partnering together to help both cities pay their proper respects to Carol and her family without either of us doing it alone," Pavey explained.

Receiving an immediate "yes" from Kohl, the two mayors have been working together for the past few months planning their two community events.

"With Carol's murder happening in Martinsville, those residents have had to endure criticism through the years. I think it's a courageous move by Mayor Kohl to embrace the opportunity to move her community forward by honoring Carol's life and her family's love and commitment to Carol's memory.

Many residents in both of our cities are unaware of Carol's story. For those residents, recognizing and honoring her life is an educational opportunity. For those who are aware of her tragic death – and may have been living in either community when she was killed – our remembrance events are opportunities to come together, to heal and find peace," Pavey said.

According to Kohl, the invitation to partner with Rushville on joint events was a welcome one.

"Mayor Pavey and I recognize the importance of leading the way towards education and healing so both our communities can move forward while joining together to remember Carol and provide peace and comfort for her family. So many good deeds are strengthened by teamwork and designed to foster knowledge. Our events November 1 and 2 certainly fall into that category," Kohl said.

In renaming and rededicating the Community Park to the Carol Jenkins-Davis Park, her story is being reintroduced to current and future generations and will teach next generations the value of inclusion and diversity.

"With her name on the park, we hope our children and grandchildren will be inspired to ask, 'Who was Carol Jenkins-Davis?' 'What is her story?' and 'Why is the park named after her?' Those simple questions, coupled with a park focused on her legacy will give parents and teachers a tremendous educational opportunity," Pavey said.

Rushville's renaming/rededication event is Wednesday, November 1 at 1:00 p.m. at the park at 409 North Fort Wayne Road.

In Martinsville, the two communities will dedicate a memory stone at the City Hall Garden in Carol's memory, turning a corner away from the painful past and remembering this wonderful young woman who meant so much to her family and all who knew her. Martinsville's event is Thursday, November 2 at 1:00 p.m. at City Hall, 59 South Jefferson Street.

Mayors Pavey and Kohl will host a reception immediately after each event on those two consecutive days for everyone in attendance.

“It adds no value to turn a blind eye to wrong doings of the past,” according to Pavey. “Instead, we should celebrate – as we are – the dawn of a new day in both communities; an era when current and future generations are allowed a fresh start without historic burdens.”

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For questions or interview requests, contact Mayor Pavey at 765-932-3735 or Mayor Kohl at 765-342-2861.