

Proclamation

Recognizing and Honoring William Gattis as a Carrboro Community Treasure

WHEREAS, William Gattis was born in Durham, N.C., on April 10, 1946, but grew up in northern Chatham County, where he acquired the value system that has shaped his life, and

WHEREAS, Living with his older sister, Annie Mae, and brother-in-law, John Abe Burnett, attending Horton Junior/Senior High School, and Hamlet Chapel AME Church, he learned the value of being independent and self-sufficient – “a word and handshake made a contract,” and

WHEREAS, Moving to Carrboro at age of 16 to live with his mother, Martha Gattis, he attended Lincoln Junior/Senior High School, where he excelled academically and encountered teachers who inspired his love for learning, such as math teacher Mr. Ross Fearington and English teacher Mrs. Alice Battle, and

WHEREAS, In 1964, he became the Drum Major for the Lincoln Marching Band and some of his fondest memories are those of participating in high school activities, such as the Student Council, Drama Club, May Day, and Homecoming, and

WHEREAS, While stationed in England with the U.S. Air Force at RAF Wethersfield, William went to a dance, where he met a young Englishwoman named Joy. They instantly connected and were married on August 17, 1968, and

WHEREAS, After completing his military service December 23, 1969, he returned with his family to Carrboro, N.C., and

WHEREAS, In December 1970, William interviewed for the Bookmobile Assistant position at the Chapel Hill Public Library at 523 East Franklin Street, and

WHEREAS, William began driving the Bookmobile in 1972, when the newly purchased Bookmobile was added to the Library’s operations with the expressed purpose of taking Library services to the underserved members of the community, making regular stops at neighborhoods, nursing homes, schools, and child care centers, and

WHEREAS, To the children who visited the bookmobile, William Gattis was the “Dream Man” who opened a new world of learning through reading, and

WHEREAS, William received both his Bachelor’s Degree in English Literature (August 1978) and his Master’s Degree in Library and Informational Science (August 1982) from the University of North Carolina, at Chapel Hill, and

WHEREAS, He drove the Bookmobile until June 1985, then he accepted a position at the Durham County Main Library as Outreach Services Librarian; advancing to Youth Services Librarian; and became Branch Manager/Adult Services Librarian (January 4, 1988) at the Stanford L. Warren Library until August 1998, where he was instrumental in writing the 77 year history of the Stanford L. Warren Library which opened April 14, 1940, and

WHEREAS, He worked as a Security Guard with the Hospital Police (2/1998-5/2003) at North Carolina Memorial Hospital and TSA Airport Security (2/1998-9/2015) at Raleigh Durham Airport, and

WHEREAS, Since retiring, he has continued his community service by participating in the Jackson Center's Historic Gateways Project, activities at the Seymour Senior Center, and membership at St. Paul AME Church, and

WHEREAS, William is particularly proud of his work as a Librarian. Libraries, he says, are "the peoples' university," and

WHEREAS, He sums up his life experiences with a quote from Maya Angelou: "My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style,"

NOW THEREFORE I, Barbara M. Foushee, Mayor of Carrboro, do hereby recognize and honor

William Gattis

As a Carrboro Community Treasure, and encourage the residents of Carrboro to join with us in expressing gratitude to William Gattis for the spirit of community and commitment she brings to the people of Carrboro.

This the 15th day of November 2025.


Barbara M. Foushee

