



## HONORARY STREET NAME SIGN APPLICATION

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall  
200 East Wells Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

### For Office Use Only:

Case number: H- Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Applicant information:

Applicant's Name Barbara J. Velez on behalf of the Reuben K. Harpole Tribute Committee

Organization or Company Reuben K. Harpole Tribute Committee

Street Address 1820 North Oakland Ave. City/State Milwaukee, WI Zip 53202

Telephone 414-223-4494 Fax \_\_\_\_\_ Email Barbara.velez@yahoo.com

### 2. Honorary Street Name Request

Street name requested Reuben K. Harpole, Jr.

Location of proposed designation: (for example, West Main Street from North 12<sup>th</sup> Street to North 15<sup>th</sup> Street)  
100-200 block of West North Avenue

### 3. Required Submittals:

- Refer to Chapter 113-3, Milwaukee Code of Ordinances
- A *typed statement* containing no fewer than **500 words** describing the significance of the person, place, or event being honored. The statement should indicate why a particular section of street has been requested for the honorary designation.

### 4. Street Naming Committee

- Upon submission of this application, please allow four to six weeks for City staff to review your request with the Street Naming Committee. Upon completion of the City's staff review, this request will be scheduled before the Street Naming Committee. All owners/residents along this street affected by the proposed honorary street name will be notified of the meeting and this is their opportunity to indicate their support or opposition to the honorary street name request. The committee will then make its recommendation to the Public Works Committee (PW). A deposit to cover the City's cost to install and/or fabricate the honorary street signs must be made before this request can be scheduled before the PW Committee. The PW Committee will make their recommendation to the Common Council. The applicant will be notified of the Common Council's action.

### 5. SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

My application consists of the following items necessary to complete the application. Please check:

- Completed Application Form, Plus One Copy, **plus a \$100 fee** (check made payable to "City Treasurer").
- Autobiography or statement regarding the person, place, or event being honored.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ /s/ Barbara J. Velez Date 7/6/09

Printed Name Barbara J. Velez

REUBEN K. HARPOLE TRIBUTE  
PLANNING COMMITTEE

Request for Street Naming in Honor of  
Reuben Keiling Harpole, Jr.

Reuben Keiling Harpole, Jr. grew up in the Walnut Street Neighborhood. His mother, Mardee Harpole, still lives at 124 West North Avenue, their initial family home was located at 807 West Somers Street. We are respectfully requesting that a street within that neighborhood be renamed Harpole Street in honor of Reuben and his family.

Reuben's roots run deep in Milwaukee, WI and his beloved hometown intends to honor him royally. A large diverse group of community volunteers have been meeting for months to plan this very special event and we are requesting not only your presence but a proclamation honoring him from your office.

On September 12, 2009, a grateful Milwaukee community will celebrate Reuben K. Harpole's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday and more than 50 years of service to African-Americans and others. The event will be held in The Wisconsin Ballroom at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee east side campus. The reception will start at 5:30 with dinner and program at 6:30. The cost for attendance is \$50 per person.

Reuben and his wife of 50 years, Mildred L. Cowan Harpole, have served as mentors, role models, and cheerleaders for many looking to get ahead and prosper, especially young people and African-Americans in particular. For decades Reuben has served as an informal Abayshia (connector). He has voluntarily helped people by sharing potential employment leads and has worked to connect entrepreneurs with funding sources for small business start-ups.

"Give back to your community..."

"Pave the road for others..."

"Bring another person along with you..."

Are the mantras and philosophies the Harpoles live by.

The septuagenarian community leader and activist was born at Milwaukee County Hospital on September 4, 1934 to Mrs. Mardree Johnson Harpole and Mr. Reuben K.

Harpole, Sr. Mardree and Reuben, Sr. divorced when Junior was a youngster. The single mother raised her three children Gloria, Mardree and Reuben with the help of their maternal Grandparents Mr. James and Mrs. Geneva Johnson.

The young Reuben looked up to Grandfather Johnson and was often found at the family grocery store where the Walnut Street neighborhood mercantile sold not only foodstuffs, but coal as well. They sold chickens from their own coop in the front yard and the hard-working family also rented bicycles. In addition to his entrepreneurial enterprises, Grandfather Johnson also worked Wisconsin Gray Iron Foundry.

Reuben attended Ninth Street Elementary, Roosevelt Junior High and North Division High schools. He joined the Army and played the Alto Saxophone in the Army's Entertainment Division in Korea from 1957 to 1959.

In 1959 Reuben married his Mildred and later in life went on to earn a bachelors degree in elementary education from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He retired from UWM in 1997 after 31 years. At the time of his retirement, Reuben served as Senior Outreach Specialist at the Center for Urban Community Development. Retirement didn't last long for Reuben.

Reuben has been a champion for people but also for his hometown. He has contributed the forward to several books written about Black Milwaukee and is often quoted in current historical tomes. He has voluntarily conducted tours of Black Milwaukee as well and continues to spread the good word about the city.

In 1998 he joined the Helen Bader Foundation, a philanthropic leader in improving the quality of life for diverse communities that awards an average of \$11 million annually. He continues to serve as a special advisor to the president of the foundation.

A typical Reuben Harpole inspired program was the Volunteer Reading Tutoring Program developed at the UWM Reading Clinic. This program trained community volunteers to work on reading skills with young students from the area. One of Reuben's colleagues describes him like this:

"The results of Reuben's work are like ripples that keep going out in a pool of water. He's the one who has been there, always throwing the pebbles in the pond. Often people

are honored for feats we can see, measure and define, but with Reuben Harpole, educator and community leader, we will never know how many, many lives are better because of his dedication to his career and his community. Reuben has selflessly dedicated himself to solving problems at a grassroots level – providing training and empowering others to lead students to success.”

In 2005, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee awarded Reuben an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters in recognition of his decades of work to help connect Milwaukee’s diverse communities.

Some of the highlights of Reuben’s illustrious career include helping to create or develop the following programs and organizations:

- College Prep Program at Marquette University High School
- Summer Prep program at Campion High School in Prairie du Chien, WI
- UWM Center for Urban Community Development
- Harambee Community Development Corporation
- Harambee Ombudsman Program
- Community Brainstorming Conference of Milwaukee
- Milwaukee Community Sailing Center
- NTU African Rites of Passage Program
- Asentu Adult Rites of Passage Institute
- Children’s Performing Arts Group which evolved into the Ko Thi Dance Company.
- Black Holocaust Museum
- Chairman of Area 7 via the Milwaukee Urban League prior to working at UWM.
- In the 1960s, Started a literacy program in the cafeteria of the Albert Trostel Tannery
- Served as a board member of the Wisconsin Indo China Relief Organization
- Milwaukee 100 Black Men Group
- Helen Bader Foundation’s Sankofa-Youth Development Program supporting organizations working with children and youth in Milwaukee’s low-income

neighborhoods. The Foundation has awarded more than \$5.6 million in support through Sankofa. (Helped develop Home Work First via the Milwaukee Public Schools.)

#### **Awards & Honors**

- Spirit of Milwaukee Award 2005
- The Archdiocese of Milwaukee honored Mildred & Reuben with Vatican II Award for their Service in Society
- YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee's Lincoln Gaines Award
- Along with Mildred, recipient of the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund's Community Service Award
- St. Mark African Methodist Episcopal Church's Dr. Martin Luther King Award
- Recipient Kilpatrick Award from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation
- Recipient of the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual United Award from the Milwaukee Urban League.
- Milwaukee County Historical Society Witness to History Award

Reuben and Mildred have two grown children, John and Annette. John and his wife, Gabrielle have a daughter Georgiana.

The community is invited to honor Reuben and Mildred Harpole at the University of Wisconsin – Wisconsin Ballroom. Brenda Bell-White and Kwabena Robert Falson are serving as chairpersons of the event.

For more information about this event and our proclamation request, please contact me at 414-223-4494, [barbara.velez@yahoo.com](mailto:barbara.velez@yahoo.com) or Kwabena Falson at 414-331-1450, [kwabena2647@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kwabena2647@sbcglobal.net).

Thank you for your interest in this event and appreciation of Reuben K. Harpole.  
Sincerely,

Barbara J. Velez,  
Reuben K. Harpole Tribute Planning Committee