

Introduced by: Councilmember Seamens

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

**RESOLUTION 2021-3
ESTABLISHING FEBRUARY 23 AS LEE JORDAN DAY IN TAKOMA PARK**

- WHEREAS, as we celebrate Black History Month, we take note of the life and accomplishments of Lee Jordan, one of the most influential residents in Takoma Park history; and
- WHEREAS, through his work with youth, including the formation of the first integrated sports program in Montgomery County, Lee Jordan was a mentor, role model and inspiration across racial lines, leaving an indelible mark on generations of Takoma Park children, both Black and White; and
- WHEREAS, as a leader and advocate on behalf of Takoma Park's African American residents, he played an important role in the forging of a resilient Black community in the face of racial discrimination and economic challenges during the period of segregation and the decades that followed; and
- WHEREAS, while a custodian at all-White Blair High School (1935-1946) and then at Takoma Junior High (until 1973), Lee Jordan, affectionately known as "Mr. Lee," ignored racial distinctions and, as a volunteer, began coaching White boys to play sports and in the meantime organized teams of boys from the Black community across Takoma Park; and
- WHEREAS, Lee Jordan deliberately and successfully overcame racial divisions by integrating Black and White players on the same sports teams and in 1953 also welcomed girls onto previously all-boys teams as part of the pioneering Boys and Girls Club he founded; and
- WHEREAS, his influence was acknowledged by school administrators and by police officers who steered youth to him for mentoring; by parents grateful for his dedication; by merchants and other sponsors who helped underwrite the development of the Boys and Girls Club; and by the boys and girls themselves who remember him as an unforgettable father figure; and
- WHEREAS, students under Mr. Jordan's guidance gained confidence, improved their skills and learned leadership to the point that one of them, Sonny Jackson, enjoyed a long baseball career in the Major Leagues, others, such as Morgan Wootton, the legendary coach at DeMatha High School, followed in his footsteps or became school principals, and Tony DeVaul became Takoma Park Police Chief; and
- WHEREAS, the Takoma Tigers, one of the most notable of Coach Jordan's teams, became the first integrated baseball team in Montgomery County following the landmark

Brown vs. Board of Education ruling and won the countywide championship with a 24-0 record; and

WHEREAS, Lee Jordan's work to break down racial barriers was recognized as a primary influence in the peaceful integration of Takoma Park's schools after the Supreme Court ruling, and many of his players went on to fill the baseball, basketball and football rosters at the newly integrated Blair High School in subsequent years; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan advocated on behalf of the Black community for City amenities such as streetlights and paved roads and led successful campaigns for a playground where Black children could play ball and families could gather, and for the construction of the Heffner Recreation Center, which became a gathering place for African Americans in Takoma Park and nearby communities; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of Mr. Jordan's life's work, the new athletic field at Takoma Park Middle School was named in his honor in 1981, and he was posthumously inducted into the Montgomery County Human Rights Hall of Fame in 2006; and

WHEREAS, in 1983 the City of Takoma Park proclaimed February 23 as Lee Jordan Day to mark his accomplishments, five years, to the day, before Mr. Jordan passed away at age 78.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Takoma Park reaffirms and declares that February 23 shall be honored each year as Lee Jordan Day.

Adopted this 17th day of February, 2021.

Kate Stewart
Mayor

Attest:

Jessie Carpenter, CMC
City Clerk