

**ACPS
District Office
Renaming**

Community Submissions

Tom Petty

Submitted:

2

- “He’s cool”
- “He went to Bishop and GHS and became very successful”

Alachua School Board or District Administration

Submitted:
13

- “No names of people. Can become too contentious.”
- “Keep it simple!”
- “Clearly defines where and what the location is.”
- “Practical”
- “I think the name should represent the entire county and not just one person. The success of the public schools depend on the teamwork and contributions of many deserving people.”
- “Because it belongs to the people of Alachua County. It shouldn't bear just one person's name, because we're all the heart of Alachua County.”
- “In honor of the district”
- “For the location of the district office and the substance of the title.
- “This name doesn't present any racial preference and avoids ensuing arguments.”

Alachua School Board or District Administration

Submitted:
13

- “Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in. Let’s keep it simple. The District Office has had this name for several years now. It has worked. The letterhead already exists with this name, all the relevant documents already have this name, and the community and getting used to this name. Let’s minimize the financial and emotional costs. We don’t need to fix what is not broken. My vote is to retain the name Alachua County Public Schools District Office.”
- “Not in favor of naming buildings after people”
- No - Be practical. If you name it for ANYONE you could end up having to change it later. Like in the case of Kirby-Smith.
- “I could not settle on one candidate to nominate - and I realized I'm probably not the only one. After much contemplation, I decided to nominate that we name it "Alachua County Public Schools District Office". In this way, no one can be offended because of the person chosen, no one will be angry that so-and-so was chosen because of so-an-so's influence. And as Ms. Wakely said during the 06.06.2024 meeting - "I hadn't thought about that person" as she described looking over the spreadsheet of nominations. There are too many great teachers, principals, employees that have come thru this district to say that one is more deserving than the other.”
- “Because that’s what it is.”

Alachua School Board or District Administration

Submitted:
13

- “A straightforward title makes far more sense than a person's name when it comes to people trying to locate information about the school district when they do a website search. Also, I think the website should be THE exclusive official organ of information for the district, rather than pandering to every social media site like Facebook, etc. After all, everyone with internet access can open websites, but only the account-holders or subscribers of certain social media sites can check those other sources of information. The latter encourages the similar naming of fake sites, and I thought our school system wanted students and parents and the public in general to have a reliable resource!

By the way, I have always been amused that EVERY school bus for our district is painted with the words "Alachua District Schools". Since when is the CITY of Alachua the headquarters of your offices? Why don't they say "Alachua County Public Schools"?"

Duckpond Building/District Office

Submitted:

2

- “No names of people. Can become too contentious.”
- “the general area”

Fred Rogers

Submitted:

1

- “Fred Rogers encouraged each child to treat everyone with kindness and that no one person is better than anyone else.”

Charles S. Chestnut III

Submitted:

4

- Read an article about Mr. Chestnut [here](#)
- “Because he did a lot for the Alachua County”
- “past school board member and significant local person.”
- “When I think of the school district and the Gainesville community, one name stands alone, Charles Chestnut III. A man who was active as a member of our school board and a member of the county/city commission. His family business is well-known throughout Alachua county. His wife is also a great supporter of the public school system, local and state government.”

Barbara Copeland

Submitted:

1

- “She worked for 20 years and has changed many lives. She just died last Tuesday.”
[May 14, 2024]

Sean Pomeroy

Submitted:

1

- “Because he was an alachua student who lost his life this year. He contributed great things to the Lyceum and IB programs such as art and musical talents as well as friendships. He also donated time, money, and effort making dog treats for shelter dogs in Alachua County through his nonprofit. His honor and tribute can also be a tribute to mental health.”

Gilbert L. Porter

Submitted:

1

- “His leadership helped to gain professional respect for black teachers, increasing from 5585 to 10000 black American teachers in Florida. First black person to hold the Assistant Superintendent position in the Dade County School District. He was the first-time Executive Secretary of the Florida State Teachers Association (1954), excelling in organizing the association, and was a fighter against the political power to obtain equal salaries and teacher contracts for black American Educators. He co-authored the book The History of The Florida State Teachers Association with Leedeil W. Neyland in 1977. all about his life in the education field can be found on: <https://www.theblackarchives.org/archon/?p=digitallibrary/digitalcontent&id=109> OR <https://drgilbertlporter.com/>”

General Edmund Kirby Smith

Submitted:

8

- “It’s fiscally irresponsible and divisive to keep changing the names of buildings.”
- “Because I think changing the name was an idiotic move, and it should be left like it was. Stop following the feelings of the minority and start listening to the majority.”
- “Leave it alone, it’s history of my town”
- “Kirby Smith was a Florida hero and educator.”
- “An honorable Florida patriot! Someone for Florida children to really remember.”
- “Honor of General Kirby”
- “It should be reinstated.”
- “Reinstate it's former name”

Joseph Joel Marcus Buchanan

Submitted:
2

- “Joseph “Joel” Marcus Buchanan, regarded by many as the foremost authority on black history in Gainesville and Alachua County, Buchanan was the first black male student to attend Gainesville High School in 1964, when he and two black female students, Sandra Williams Cummings and LaVon Wright Bracy, crossed the segregated school line in Alachua County. In 1966, Buchanan graduated from GHS with honors, and went on to graduate in the early 1970s from University of Florida with a bachelor's degree. He also earned a master's degree at UF.

He retired in 2010 as a history liaison at the UF Smathers Library Special Collections Department after a professional career that included stints as a teacher at Howard Bishop Middle School and Santa Fe College. He also worked in the UF financial aid office.

Buchanan is best known for his contributions to preserving black history in Gainesville and Alachua County. He organized an exhibit at Smathers Library that featured the late A. Quinn Jones, a legendary Alachua County educator who was the principal at former all-black Lincoln High School from its creation in the early 1920s until he retired in the late 1950s.

Carl Van Ness, head of archives and manuscripts in the special collections department at Smathers Library, said Buchanan was instrumental in procuring black archival material for Smathers Library.

“He played a key role in opening up some of the key archives in the African-American community in Gainesville,” said Van Ness, adding that Buchanan received archival material from the Visionaires Inc. of Gainesville, a local civic/social organization for black women, and also from Dr. Edgar A. Cosby, who, in 1950, became the first black dentist to open a practice in Gainesville, FL.”
- “Joel Buchanan was the first black male to integrate Gainesville High School in 1964. He was an educator in the Alachua County School system and at Santa Fe Community College. Mr. Buchanan is known for the many years he spent preserving afro-american history and communities in Alachua County. His contributions to change in Alachua County should be recognized...”

Phillip Johnston

Submitted:

1

- “Philip Johnston is considered the first Navajo code talker, having proposed the idea to the Marine Corps in 1942. Johnston was a World War I veteran and civil engineer who grew up on the Navajo Nation. He presented his idea to General Vogel and his staff at Camp Elliott on February 28, 1942. The first 29 Navajo Marines were recruited, and with help from a Marine cryptographic officer, created the code in San Diego using Navajo nouns as the basis for the code.”

Dolores Huerta

Submitted:

1

- “Dolores Huerta: Labor Leader, Civil Rights Activist, Organizer. Co-founder of the United Farm Workers Association, Dolores Huerta has spent most of her life fighting for better working conditions for farmworkers and the rights of the downtrodden.”

Alachua County Education and Inclusion District

Submitted:

1

- “Our school community is enrolling students from different Countries, cultures, is our mission and responsibility to demonstrate it to our citizens. They are going to feel Welcomed in Alachua”

Gloria Jean Merriex

Submitted:
11

- “My mother Gloria Merriex made a major impact in Gainesville, she was a teacher a Duval Elem for 20 plus years.. She set and accomplished many goals that was unreal.. Now she has a documentary out about her life.”
- “Ms. Merriex did extraordinary research and work with the students of Duval Elementary here in Gainesville, FL. Her teaching strategies have been studied and proven to be successful. She was a wonderful role model for other teachers and students alike.”
- “Ms. Merriex dedicated her life to the betterment of her students at Duval Elementary! There was a recent documentary, “Class of her Own.” It documented the reason why she was a pillar in her community, and the District Office being named in her honor is only befitting to the contributions she has given to the educational community in Alachua County.”
- “Her work as a teacher within the community”
- “In honor of someone”
- “She made a huge impact of the educational system in our county and had a huge impact on a lot of educators and peers”

Gloria Jean Merriex (continued)

Submitted:
11

- “She Taught at Duval Elementary until her Passing and her Legacy needs to be honored and She was a Great Leader and Roll Model for all of Students and Especially those who worked with her at Duval Elementary.”
- “Gloria was a gifted teacher that taught children at the Duval Fine Arts Academy. She had a unique approach to teaching minority student that resulted in some of the highest standardized test scores in the district.”
- “She was my 3rd grade teacher and I loved her and I miss her and made a difference in the Duval community God rest her soul”
- “I recently watched the documentary "Class of her own." As a current teacher at Terwilliger Elementary, it ignited ideas and my reason Why I became a teacher.”
- “I am suggesting this name in honor of Gloria Jean Merriex. Hers is a story of overcoming odds in the pursuit of academic excellence for the children of our community. When "No Child Left Behind" was enacted, her efforts helped to raise what was Charles W. Duval Elementary School (now Duval Early Learning Academy) from a "failing" school to an A-rated school. Such commitment to our students should be remembered and celebrated as an example for all teachers. I encourage those making this decision to learn more about this inspiring educator, regardless of the outcome of this process. Thank you.”

Teresa Bruney

Submitted:

1

- “Local area Nurse and UF College of Nursing faculty member Dr. Teresa Bruney passed away on May 2nd after bravely battling illness for a year. Dr. Bruney's impact on pediatric care in the Alachua County area, and thus so many children in the ACPS District, is immeasurable. In caring for our children for decades, Dr. Bruney made a significant contribution to the well-being of our community, and especially our children, and her dedication and expertise will continue to inspire us. I know I am not the only one who would love to see her honored in this way, as so many of us have been touched by her love and care.”

Dr. Hazel Williams (“Sister” Hazel)

Submitted:

4

- “Sister Hazel worked tirelessly to help the people of Gainesville, especially those most in need. She is remembered as a beacon of compassion, charity, and grace. More things should be named after her.”
- “My Daughter attends Buchholz and I received this. As former resident of Gaineville my answer as to why is in depth. As I am about to get off train in Chicago for work, I can write more if requested. However, it ought not need a thorough explanation. It ought not need one at all.”
- “In honor of Hazel Williams, Gainesville’s “Sister Hazel”. She was the founder of Angel of Mercy Ministries, known for her community outreach to the impoverished of Gainesville. She dedicated her life to serving the homeless community. She worked in prison ministry and received the Spirit of Gainesville Award for Community Service in 2013.
- “She did so much for the less fortunate in this community, including for teenagers with incarcerated parents”

Thomas E. (Pop) Diedeman

Submitted:

1

- “He began as a science teacher and football coach in 1956 then became principal at High Springs Elementary where he helped shape the lives of thousands of youth. He spent summer’s driving the school bus to the local springs were he taught (at his own expense) hundreds of kids to swim. In 1970 Pop took on the task of opening the very first middle school in the county, “Springhill Middle school” where he served as Principal until his retirement in the 1980’s. Tom was a fellow with the High Springs Rotary Club where he was honored for never missing a weekly meeting. He was a trustee with The High Springs First United Methodist Church . Pop spent over 40 years working in the Alachua County School Board. He served a Mayor of High Springs as well as serving honorably in the US Navy during World War II. He was a graduate of the University of Florida getting both an BA and ME in education.”

Dr. William C. Thomas Sr.

Submitted:

1

- “Dr. Thomas Sr. was a beloved Gainesville physician who helped found Alachua General Hospital and was its first chief of staff. In his long career, he delivered over 8,000 children and saw patients until his death at 81. He is also the father of Dr. William C. Thomas Jr. who also served all the important positions at the Gainesville VAMC – director of Research Service, Chief of the Medical Service, and Chief of Staff during his career. Both of them are a huge part of the medical success and growth of Gainesville, FL and the county as a whole. I'd love to see them honored for helping our community become what it is today.”

Mary "Sue" Griffith

Submitted:

1

- “She dedicated many years to the school system and was a caring person who worked hard for the students and families of this county. Read her obituary [here](#)”

Jonathan Clarkson Gibbs

Submitted:

1

- “Jonathan Clarkson Gibbs was among the first African-American office holders in Alachua County and helped to establish the Florida Department of Education while he was Superintendent of Public Instruction for the state.”

Dr. Doris Richardson

Submitted:

1

- “She gave so very much to all of us in Alachua county. Her years of experience and belief that we should always do "what is best for the children" make her a wonderful candidate for the name of our district building. She inspired her teachers and was completely able to walk into any of our classrooms and pick up where we left off and teach with all the credibility of any grade level teacher. She also stood behind her staff and even took her own vehicle and her own time if needed to help an employee. She was the best!”

Dr. Cullen Banks

Submitted:

1

- “Dr. Cullen Banks is Gainesville. He lived on the eastside of town across the street from Lincoln. My mother would point out his house every time we would pass by it. She would smile and say, "That Dr. Banks house, he delivered me." Come to find out he delivered a lot of people who lived on the eastside of town. Dr. Banks is and always will be someone that represent who the eastside of Gainesville resident strives to be. Please review the [following link](#)”

John Dukes Jr.

Submitted:

7

- “Mr Dukes, never had another job but, 50 years he served Alachua County Schools. A former Teacher, First principal of Eastside High School and the remaining of his career tell his death, at the Alachua County School Board office. He spent countless hours in his office after school and work hours, answering phone calls, taking care of student services. In the grocery store, he was talking to parents and students about concerns in the school system. Teaching students in a grocery store history about the Alachua County School system. A man who was humble, honest, compassionate who went above and beyond for over 50 years at the same job. Helping to improve the education of employees, helping to educate parents, family, and citizens on history and taking his own personal time in public to talk to anyone concerned or had questions about Alachua County Schools.”
- “When I think of this school district, no other name (besides my mother's) stands out. John Dukes Jr. spent his high school student career and his professional career as an educator in Alachua County Schools. He helped this district navigate desegregation and did so professionally. John's wife, son, grandson, two sisters, daughter-in-law, and nephew have taught or are teaching in the public schools. I know that he has a building named for him at Duval, however, John deserves this honor.”

John Dukes Jr. (continued)

Submitted:

7

- “In honor of Mr. Dukes who faithful served the Alachua County school district for 49 years. Mr. Dukes was a teacher at Lincoln High School from 1954-1966 before becoming principal of Lincoln High School in 1966. He continued in this role until the closing of Lincoln High School. He provided leadership during the change from a freedom of choice to a unitary system during the court ordered desegregation of Alachua County public schools. Mr. Dukes was the principal of Eastside High School from 1970-1975 and the Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services from 1976-2003. He was a humble man whose focus was always doing what was right for each student first. His dedication, loyalty, and leadership to Alachua County public schools makes him deserving of this honor.”
- “Mr. Dukes was a principal and an administrator. He always had time to talk to anyone that needed his advice on educational matters. Mr. Dukes was always supportive to families, the community and employees.”
- “He served ACPS for 50 years. [Here](#) is his write up in the Gainesville Sun.”
- “For all of his dedication to the students and staff of Alachua County.”
- “John Dukes – teacher and principal here in Alachua County. Time to elevate his recognition beyond what has been done at this point”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Submitted:

1

- “Because he made learning accessible for ALL students no matter the color of their skin”

Zora Neale Hurston

Submitted:

2

- “She is an important Floridian whose novels take place in our region of Florida.”
- “Zora Neale Hurston was an amazing author who promoted literacy in a time when it was deemed illegal. Being raised in Florida from the age of 3 years old she is considered a daughter of Florida. Her novels speak of Florida, love and determination.

She was a central figure of the Harlem Renaissance. After moving back to Florida from attending college, Hurston wrote and published her literary anthology on African-American folklore in North Florida.”

Governor Bob Graham

Submitted:

3

- “Bob Graham's legacy looms large here in Florida, and it would be right an fitting to have the district office named for a man who dedicated his life to inspiring and serving Floridians. Bob Graham is a graduate of the University of Florida where he holds distinguished honors such as an inductee into Phi Beta Kappa and the UF Hall of Fame. Graham served as both the Governor of Florida (1979-1987) and as U.S. Senator representing Florida (1987-2005). In 2006, Bob Graham founded the Bob Graham Center for Public Service at University of Florida which is centered on creating a community of students and citizens who are dedicated to civic engagement, public leadership, and public service. Graham, sadly, passed away this year (2024) and I feel it would be a wonderful tribute to a man who has inspired so many in Alachua County as well as across Florida and beyond.”
- “Best Governor of Florida”
- “In honor of the late Senator Bob Graham who passed away recently in Gainesville.”

James Wendell Longstreth

Submitted:

1

- “James Wendell Longstreth was the first appointed superintendent of Alachua County's public schools.

Dr. Longstreth is the only person in Florida known to have served as an elected superintendent, an appointed superintendent, a School Board member, a chief negotiator, a university professor and a school principal.”

Harriet Tubman

Submitted:

1

- “Harriet Tubman is an inspirational figure who embodies values of courage, determination, and education. She made significant contributions to society by leading slaves to freedom through the Underground Railroad and later advocating for women's suffrage and civil rights. This name would honor her legacy and reflect the district's commitment to education and community welfare.”

A. Quinn Jones

Submitted:

1

- “In honor of being one of the oldest deceased educators in this county, helping children and their families to better themselves, pressing towards a greater future of education. His legacy still stands and rings true today. Thank You for your consideration.”

1885 Alachua

Submitted:

1

- “The year of the first public school built in Alachua.”

Donald S. Lewis

Submitted:

2

- “This is in honor of the late Donald S. Lewis, who spent his entire educational career in the ACPS system. From teacher to AP, to Principal, to District Director of Curriculum, and back to Principal again, Don Lewis changed the lives of thousands of children and mentored many of today's thriving teaching and principal staff at ACPS.”
- “In honor of longtime principal Don Lewis (Ft Clarke, Lincoln Middle). So many current administrators learned from his leadership at Lincoln, I can think of more than 5, and as many as 10 current administrators who were assistant principals under Mr. Lewis. (I taught at Lincoln for 23 years). He passed away in 2019 and has never received proper recognition.”

Ruby Bridges

Submitted:

1

- “Ruby Bridges - First Black Child to Integrate an All-White Elementary School in the South. On November 14, 1960, at the age of six, Ruby Bridges changed history and became the first African American child to integrate an all-white elementary school in the South.”

Josiah T. Walls

Submitted:

2

- “He was a major barrier breakers for this County.
- “To honor the first Black man to be elected as a Florida State Representative to Congress. In the face of adversity, he manages to persevere, and his story can be seen as inspirational for ACOS students, who may also be able to learn more about Walls and who he was”

Virgil Darnell Hawkins

Submitted:

1

- “Virgil Darnell Hawkins gave up his spot to be the first African-American to attend UF in order to pave the way for the desegregation of the university. His sacrifice should be honored and his passion for education is an inspiration that we should aspire towards.”

Alachua District Schools United Together

Submitted:

2

- “N/a”
- “I believe the Kirby Smith Center should be renamed to the Unity Building to show the commitment that everyone in the Alachua County community has towards the building up our children's education.”

Christa McAuliffe

Submitted:

1

- “In honor of Christa McAuliffe - she was lost from Florida inspiring a generation of schoolchildren and teachers.”

Mary McLeod Bethune

Submitted:

1

- “Based on Mary McLeod Bethune”

Cecil Mercer

Submitted:

1

- “Cecil Mercer was a long-time professor at UF, who was an internationally known expert on learning disabilities and effective instructional practices. Over the years, Cecil also worked very closely with Alachua County schools to support teachers and students. With John Ross, he created the Multidisciplinary Diagnostic and Training Project (MDTP), more commonly known at the time as the Ross-Mercer Project, which provided in-depth assessment and support services at no cost to families. His children all attended ACPS, and he was a well-loved coach of youth sports in the community. An honor like this would be quite fitting. [In Memoriam: Cecil D. Mercer, Ph.D., special education ‘giant’ – COE News](#)”

James Baldwin

Submitted:

1

- “An American author who wrote insightfully about race in America. He is just as pertinent today as he was 60 years ago.”

Benjamin Zephaniah

Submitted:

1

- “In honor of Benjamin Zephaniah; poet, activist against social injustice. He was a friend and follower of the late Maya Angelou and lover of all people regardless of race, color, creed, origin, religion, or gender”

Magnolia Bradley Jackson

Submitted:
3

- “Ms Jackson was a Gainesville resident and dedicated her life to teach and educate”
- “We would like to nominated the late Magnolia B. Jackson. The centenarian was a lifelong resident and educator with the Alachua County School System for 40 years. She proudly served as the principal of the historically-Black Rochelle Elementary School until its closure in 1977. Magnolia was a pillar of the community who touched the lives of thousands of students. The city of Gainesville has recognized March 14th as Magnolia B. Jackson Day sine 2018. At 106, she was the oldest living Alachua County resident and the oldest living alumna of Bethune-Cookman University.”
- “I'm submitting the name of my cousin (Magnolia Bradley Jackson) who recently passed away in Gainesville, FL, on May 25, 2024 (at the age of 106). She was a retired educator (teacher and principal) who dedicated 40 years of service to the Alachua County Public School District. Magnolia Bradley Jackson was also the oldest living graduate of Bethune-Cookman University (at the time of her passing). She was a lifelong learner and inspiration to many. A number of family members and others are educators, because of her positive influence.”

Thomas A. Wright

Submitted:

3

- “Thomas A. Wright was president of the Gainesville chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and was committed to integrating the schools. His bravery and determination for change is captured well in the linked [article.](#)”

District Hall

Submitted:

1

- “I think it's a good name because i also like the name in place of town hall because if you used town hall it would sound weird”

Abijah Bertrand

Submitted:
12

- “In honor of Abijah who passed away but left a mark on education in Alachua County for generations to come. As a special education teacher for more than 15+ years in Alachua County, teaching at Gainesville High School, Buchholz High School and Sidney Lanier, Abijah was a guru in this county and industry. He received the Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce Community Impact Award in 2019 for outstanding service in this field. He was married to Staci Bertrand and has four sons, Alijah, Ethan, Aaron and Evan who live in Alachua county and attend school here. He was known and loved by all who met him and his legacy lives on through us.”
- “In honor of Abijah Bertrand who passed away in December 2019. Renaming the school county's administration building in honor of Abijah Bertrand as the "Abijah Bertrand Administration Building" would be a fitting tribute to an individual whose contributions have significantly enhanced the field of special education and the well-being of our community. Abijah Bertrand's legacy is one of profound dedication to community service, making this renaming not only appropriate but also an inspiration for future generations. Mr. Bertrand championed dedication, equity, community involvement, and bridging educational gaps. Renaming the administration building to the "Abijah Bertrand Administration Building" would be a testament to his dedication to and the well-being of the community. It would celebrate his life's work and inspire future generations to strive for the same level of commitment and excellence that he embodied.”
- “Abijah Bertrand-taught special needs students in Alachua County school district prior to his passing.”
- “Abijah Bertrand helped so many families in the special needs world including me. He changed lives. He is so deserving of naming the building after him and keeping his legacy alive.”

Abijah Bertrand

Submitted:
12

- “In honor of Mr. Abijah Bertrand, who graduated as a teacher from the University of Florida, resided, worked, and raised his family of five here in Gainesville, served as an Exceptional Student Education teacher in the Alachua County school system for years, and founded and founded and established Life Transition Skills, Inc., an amazing support program for young adults with special needs, that carries on today. He positively influenced our community for years and years with his vision of inclusiveness, equality, and love for all students and people in Gainesville. Abijah met an untimely and tragic death, but he lives on so strongly in every single person's heart that came to know him. It would be an honor for Gainesville to carry his name on our education building. Also, it would be an incredible honor for his widow, Staci, and family of four young sons to see him recognized by the community he loved so much.”
- “Abijah Bertrand was a pillar in our community. He graduated from University of Florida and received is Bachelor’s Degree in Education and then his Master’s Degree in Special Education. He wanted what was best for the children in Alachua County. He decided to help those that was less fortunate to succeed. He and his wife Staci started a tutoring company to help children thrive. Abijah then took notice of children with disabilities and decided to do more to help them. He not only helped many of them through school, but he also helped them with life skills so they would be able to be productive independent individuals. He would get calls in the middle of the night because one of them was scared living on their own. Abijah would leave his family to go and stay with them so they didn’t feel alone and frightened. This was the type of man he was. Abijah had an accident a few years ago that took his life. He leaves behind 4 boys, a wife, mother and father, sisters and brothers, a host of friends. It would be a great memorial to the memory and the dedication of Abijah Bertrand.”
- “Abijah was a pivotal figure in the area of special education in Alachua County. His determination and know-how piloted him into opening his own nonprofit organization for young adults with disabilities. He saw a need in the community and followed suite with his vision.”
- “for what Mr. Bertrand has done for the Gainesville community”

Abijah Bertrand (continued)

Submitted:
12

- “Abijah Bertrand was an educator for 15 years, serving youth and young adults with disabilities in Alachua County. Abijah attended the University of Florida, where he graduated in 2002 with a Bachelor’s in Education with a focus on Special Education and then in 2004 with a Master’s in Education. He later returned to school and graduated in 2016 with an additional Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership, qualifying him to work as a school principal.

Abijah utilized the most creative and caring teaching strategies to make a difference for those he served. He was recognized as a Tom Ringwood Inclusion Teacher of the Year, TV 20 Teacher of the Month, UF Health Annual Black History Month Community Leader, and the Gainesville Chamber of Commerce 2019 Spirit of Greater Gainesville award recipient.

Abijah Bertrand was also an experienced and passionate entrepreneur. He was the co-founder and CEO of Florida Smart Kids Learning Institute, providing supplemental educational services or “free tutoring” for more than 700 elementary students and employing over 100 tutors throughout Alachua County through a state funded contract. He worked full-time with a non-profit organization in which he founded, called Life Transition Skills Inc. This organization was created to empower youth and young adults with disabilities to improve their quality of life, independence, and career skills through meaningful activities and services. This was his life work and he believed it represented one of his callings in life.

Abijah was an amazing role model and community leader and was best described as a doer, a go-getter, and someone who is always willing to lend a helping hand. Abijah passed away in 2019 leaving a legacy of helping the less fortunate. He will be remembered as one of the hardest working individuals in Gainesville always putting the needs of others before himself.”

Abijah Bertrand (continued)

Submitted:
12

- “Abijah Bertrand was a god-fearing man, devoted husband, dedicated father of four, gifted musician, and an inspirer to hundreds of youth in Alachua County, FL.

He was a faithful man of integrity, compassion, courage, and conviction. Humble, gentle, and patient are words that aptly described his sterling character. He was a role model who was well-respected in our community.

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He worked full-time with a non-profit organization in which he founded, called Life Transition Skills Inc. The organization was created to empower youth and young adults with disabilities to improve their quality of life, independence, and career skills through meaningful activities and services. This was his life’s work and one of his callings.

Abijah utilized the most creative and caring teaching strategies to make a difference for those he served. He was recognized as a Tom Ringwood Inclusion Teacher of the Year, TV 20 Teacher of the Month, UF Health Annual Black History Month Community Leader, and Greater Gainesville Chamber 2019 Spirit of Greater Gainesville award recipient.

I had the pleasure of knowing Abijah, his wife Staci, and his sons for many years. Please accept my unqualified and strongest recommendation to name the ACPS District Office after Abijah Bertrand. Thank you for your consideration.”

Matthew M. Lewey

Submitted:

1

- “Matthew M. Lewey (1845-1933) was a Civil War combat veteran. After the war, he was a graduate of Lincoln University and attended Howard Law School.

Subsequently, he moved to Florida and Became the first licensed African American lawyer in Florida.

During Reconstruction, Lewey served as Mayor and Postmaster of Newnansville. He was elected by the people to the state legislature to represent Alachua County.

He was a leader of the 1884 Independent Party of Florida, founder of the Gainesville Sentinel newspaper, the 1905 Pensacola Street Car Boycott, and the 1919-20 Florida Voter Registration Movement.”

Thelma M. Jordan

Submitted:

1

- “She was the first black principal in the district. Also the shorter version "Jordan Building" doesn't conflict with any other schools or buildings in the area.”
- “First Black principal within the ACPS school district”

J. J. Finley

Submitted:

1

- “In honor of someone.”

Justice Thurgood Marshall

Submitted:
1

- From: “Thurgood Marshall—perhaps best known as the first African American Supreme Court justice—played an instrumental role in promoting racial equality during the civil rights movement. As a practicing attorney, Marshall argued a record-breaking 32 cases before the Supreme Court, winning 29 of them. In fact, Marshall represented and won more cases before the high court than any other person. During his 24-year term as Supreme Court justice, Marshall’s passionate support for individual and civil rights guided his policies and decisions. Most historians regard him as an influential figure in shaping social policies and upholding laws to protect minorities.”

and

‘Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954): This landmark case was considered Marshall’s greatest victory as a civil-rights lawyer. A group of Black parents whose children were required to attend segregated schools filed a class-action lawsuit. The Supreme Court unanimously ruled that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”’

Dr. Patricia Hilliard-Nunn

Submitted:

2

- “She died August 5,2020”
- “did tremendous work on African American Black history education including her research on lynchings in Alachua County”

Ronald Reagan

Submitted:

2

- “In honor of President Ronald Reagan, an inspiring leader who strengthened America & worked hard to enhance quality of school curricula, improve teacher performance, & drove for rigorous academic standards.”
- “Best president of the modern day.”

Titus J. Harper

Submitted:

1

- “Titus James Harper, life long educator in Alachua County and First Black Dean for serve in that office at Gainesville High School.”

Edward M. Wanton

Submitted:

1

- “In honor of a true hero of freedom, he was the first to settle Micanopy (1821) with his literate free black wife and children. He was the only white man allowed to live amongst the Seminoles on Payne's Prairie. His ardent hatred of slavery persuaded Moses Elias Levy to transform the Arredondo colony from a Jewish homeland to one based on abolitionist ideals. This settlement fell apart when the US Army campaigned to close the largest slave refuge in the southern US. He fought against the spread of oppression and strove to give a refuge to ex-enslaved blacks and natives as well as European refugees from war and religious programs.”

Perry McGriff

Submitted:

1

- “Perry McGriff, Jr. (June 29, 1937 – February 2, 2017) was an American politician, retired insurance agent, and former All-American college football and baseball player. McGriff was a member of the Florida House of Representatives, Mayor of Gainesville and Democratic nominee for a seat in the Florida Senate.

Early life and Education

McGriff was born in Arcadia, Florida, in 1937. He attended the University of Florida in Gainesville, where he was a member of Phi Delta Theta Fraternity (Florida Alpha Chapter) and Florida Blue Key leadership honorary. McGriff played college football for coach Bob Woodruff's Florida Gators football team in 1958 and 1959, and led the Gators with fourteen receptions for 360 receiving yards and was an honorable mention All-American in 1959. McGriff was also an outfielder for coach Dave Fuller's Florida Gators baseball team from 1958 to 1960, and was honored as a first-team All-Southeastern Conference (SEC) selection in 1959 and 1960, a first-team All-American in 1959, and a second-team All-American in 1960. He received his bachelor's degree in physical education from Florida in 1960, and was inducted into the University of Florida Athletic Hall of Fame as a "Gator Great" in 1969.

Political Career

McGriff, a Democrat, served as the 22nd district Representative in the Florida House of Representatives from 2000 to 2002. He also served as an Alachua County, Florida, commissioner, as a Gainesville, Florida city commissioner and as Gainesville mayor. In 2010, he was the unsuccessful Democratic Party nominee for Florida's 14th senate district, losing to the incumbent Republican Steve Oelrich, 46 to 54 percent.

McGriff lived in Gainesville with his family. He died on February 2, 2017, at the age of 79.”

Chester Shell

Submitted:

1

- “Chester Shell from Hawthorne Fl”

Y.K. Wong

Submitted:

1

- “YK Wong, first asian student at UF.”

Mildred Russell

Submitted:

1

- “Mildred Russell, former Board member, teacher, and volunteer/mentor”

Sweetwater Center

Submitted:

1

- “Historic location based, in honor of the adjacent flowing (and soon to be sunlighted, I hope) Sweetwater Branch.”

Ida B. Wells

Submitted:

1

- “Ida B Wells began her career as an educator in the South and became a tireless and passionate advocate for Civil Rights and Universal Suffrage. Now, more than ever, it is important we remember the advocates that came before and teach our children to stand strong and uncompromising in the face of injustice.”

Jere Steele

Submitted:

1

- “In the city of Gainesville PK Yonge is a beloved school and Jere Steele was a beloved teacher by anyone taught by him. The best I've had by far. He was Innovative, fun and effective using creative ideas to get the best out of his students. He embodies what education should be. Also a decorated war veteran and unfortunately not with us anymore, this would honor his imprint on the youth of our community.”

Dr. John Banks

Submitted:

1

- “In honor of Dr. John Banks, a long-time educational leader who dedicated his career to Alachua County education and progress within the Alachua County school district, and who contributed significantly to the infrastructure of many programs that helped the community thrive.”

Timucua Center

Submitted:

1

- “The Timucua were the original inhabitants of present-day Alachua County, and naming the ACPS District Office the "Timucua Center" would honor their legacy and recognize the deep historical roots of our community. This name reflects the district's commitment to acknowledging and respecting the rich cultural heritage of the area. By choosing a name that pays tribute to the indigenous people who first called this land home, we can promote a deeper understanding of local history and foster a sense of respect and connection to the past. This geographically descriptive name is also in alignment with the provisions set forth by the School Board of Alachua County Policy 7250.”

Barbara Gallant

Submitted:

1

- “Mrs. Gallant was my teacher in 1978 and 1979, and she was the best I ever had. She made all of her classes interesting, taught us how to critically think for ourselves, and she challenged each student to live up to their potential. Her dedication to teaching and her genuine interest in everyone’s success was something I have never forgotten. Her commitment to Gainesville students continued with her involvement in the school board and her desire to provide the best education possible for everyone. She always stood firm for what she believed in, even when her stance was not the popular one, and she continued her entire life to fight for Gainesville’s students and teachers. It was an honor to be her student, to feel that “fear” as I entered her classroom because I knew I was going to have to give 100% for the next hour, no sliding by and no excuses. It was inspiring to follow school board meetings on Gainesville’s public access channel and see her making her case with such passion and courage. She was a wonderful citizen, dedicating her life to making Gainesville’s educational system the best it could be, and I believe she is more than deserving of this honor.”