

RESOLUTION NO. RS2019-1630

A resolution honoring the service and legacy of Josephine Groves Holloway, founder of Nashville's first Girl Scout troops for African-American girls.

WHEREAS, on March 19, 1898, Josephine Groves Holloway was born in Cowpens, South Carolina to John Wesley Groves and Emma Mae Gray; and

WHEREAS, encouraged by her father, a Methodist minister who valued education, and on the advice of a high school teacher who recognized her promise, Josephine enrolled in Fisk University in the fall of 1919; and

WHEREAS, she worked her way through college mending dining hall table cloths and winding clocks in practice rooms, and despite battling influenza and a shortage of funds, she graduated in 1923 receiving a degree in Sociology; and

WHEREAS, upon graduation, she became a social worker at the Bethlehem Center at 1417 Charlotte Avenue in September of 1923 – a job she saw as her ideal where she could use the skills she had acquired in college while working to change the world around her; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure at the Bethlehem Center, charged with establishing programming to help black girls and women, she was inspired by the mission of the Girl Scouts, and attended a Girl Scout leader training with Girl Scout founder, Juliette Low, at the Southern Education Conference on Scouting at George Peabody College in January of 1924; and

WHEREAS, Josephine received her commission as a Girl Scout program captain at the conference and subsequently organized approximately 150 girls into troops, establishing the first African-American Girl Scout troops in Middle Tennessee in 1924; and

WHEREAS, after her marriage on June 30, 1925 to Guerney Holloway, a former schoolmate and co-worker at the Bethlehem Center, Josephine was discouraged by the Center from continuing her job there, and without her persistence and enthusiasm for scouting, the flourishing program she had established floundered; and

WHEREAS, she decided to return to college to earn a business degree from Tennessee A. & I. State College, and went on to serve as an assistant registrar at Fisk University from 1927 to 1934, and then went to work for the State of Tennessee in the Department of Welfare; and

WHEREAS, in 1933, still believing that Girl Scouts was "the very best influence" for girls, and wanting this experience for her young daughters, Nareda, Josephine, and Weslia, she attempted, once again, to establish and lead a troop of African-American girls, but was denied formal membership status by the Girl Scout Council; and

WHEREAS, with the help of her husband Guerney, who while attending medical school at the University of Chicago had purchased Girl Scout handbooks for the girls in her troop, and with determination, she continued her work leading an "unofficial" troop for 10 years, and was finally successful in petitioning for Troop 200's formal acceptance in 1943; and

WHEREAS, in November of 1944, Holloway became the first African-American professional within the Girl Scouts of the Cumberland Valley, joining the Council as an organizer and field advisor, and went on to serve as a district director and camp director; and

WHEREAS in 1951, determined to create opportunities for African-American girls to experience the joys of camping, that due to segregation were only provided to white Girl Scouts within the Council, she enlisted

help from the girls in her troop and Fisk University fraternity members to build what is today known as Camp Holloway in Millersville, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS in 1955, Camp Holloway was opened and with capital investment by the Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee, continues to thrive today as a year-round camp for all Girl Scouts; and

WHEREAS at a bicentennial celebration in 1976, the Cumberland Valley Girl Scout Council honored Holloway as a "Hidden Heroine" who had made a vital contribution to her community but had never been properly recognized; and

WHEREAS, described by historians as a "pioneer" and a "lamplighter," Josephine Groves Holloway lived her life with passion to improve the world around her, and persevered in facing and removing racist obstacles, and provided opportunities for black girls in Nashville while helping Girl Scouts of America become a more inclusive organization; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the Metropolitan Council recognize the significant contributions Josephine Groves Holloway has made in the Girl Scouts of America organization.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. The Metropolitan Council hereby goes on record as honoring the service and legacy of Josephine Groves Holloway, founder of Nashville's first Girl Scouts troops for African-American girls.

Section 2. The Metropolitan Council Office is directed to prepare a copy of this Resolution to be presented to Ms. Agenia Clark, Chief Executive Officer of Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee.

Section 3. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.

INTRODUCED BY:

Angie Henderson
Member of Council