

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KANKAKEE HONORS TRAILBLAZING BUSINESSMAN & FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN LICENSED BARBER IRA D. NELSON WITH SCHUYLER AVENUE STEERT DESIGNATION FOR HIS HISTORIC "NELSON'S BARBERSHOP"

(KANKAKEE, ILLINOIS, AUGUST 12, 2026) - The 600 block of North Schuyler will be named "Honorary Ira D. Nelson Avenue" on Saturday, August 15, when the City Council unveils a street named in memory of where he established "Nelson's Barbershop" at 640 N. Schuyler in the mid-1960's, renamed "Nelson's Beauty Parlor" to include his cosmetology work and clients. The celebration kicks off at the corner of North Schuyler and Birch Street.

Nelson was a Korean Conflict Army veteran and ordained deacon of Zion Gate Missionary Baptist Church. He was born in Artesia, Mississippi, in 1931 and passed in Kankakee in 2020.

Nelson obtained his diplomas from Chicago's Moler's Barber School in March 1960 and Chicago's Lydia Adams Beauty School in June 1961, which paved the way for his barbershop to include cosmetology client under its final longstanding name Nelson's Beauty Parlor. He bought the 640 N. Schuyler building, a former grocery store, after he secured a loan from First Trust Bank, an incredible feat for a Black man of that time. He was also a barber at Manteno Developmental Center for 13 years. His business was his passion and it showed in the thousands who made it a celebrated, central gathering spot for almost 50 years.

It also became the site of a love story when former Ruby Chisholm, a notable and now-retired Kankakee School District 111 teacher, walked in to get her older son Greg a haircut in 1966. They wed in 1973. Mrs. Nelson's tireless efforts to apply to commemorate the shop's former location finally produced the City Council's resolution signed by Mayor Christopher Curtis in July, which she was there to receive in her late husband's honor.

This family-friendly community event will include the sign's unveiling and a heartwarming ceremony including special words from very special guests. Please share this release and come honor an important piece of Kankakee's history.

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Ladies of SCORE is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization serving the Kankakee, Illinois, area.