

★ **Roll Call Number**

Agenda Item Number

42

Date October 21, 2013

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF DES MOINES, IOWA:

That it hereby receives and files the letter received from the Union Park Neighborhood Association regarding the request for the naming of the east and west shelters at Union Park and hereby refers the request to the City Manager and Parks and Recreation Board for review and recommendation.

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ to adopt.

(Sponsored by Councilmember Mahaffey)

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
COLEMAN				
GRIESS				
HENSLEY				
MAHAFFEY				
MEYER				
MOORE				
TOTAL				

MOTION CARRIED APPROVED

**CERTIFICATE**

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

Union Park Neighborhood Association  
1710 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Des Moines, IA 50316

March 27, 2013

Des Moines City Council  
c/o City Clerk  
400 Robert D. Ray Drive  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear City Council Members:

We, the members of the Steering Committee of the Union Park Neighborhood Association (UPNA), respectfully request that the existing unnamed "east shelter" in Union Park be named after long-time Union Park neighborhood residents and UPNA supporters Bill and Nellie Ritchie, and that the existing unnamed "west shelter" be named after long-time Union Park neighborhood resident and civic leader Margaret Swanson.

The proposed "Ritchie Shelter" is located north of Thompson Avenue, approximately one block west of E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The proposed "Swanson Shelter" is located north of the Heritage Carousel.

Enclosed are biographies of Bill and Nellie Ritchie and Margaret Swanson, detailing examples of their dedication to the Union Park neighborhood and City of Des Moines. These individuals gave of themselves selflessly for the betterment of our community, and were models of volunteer service. Naming the east and west shelters in Union Park after them would be a fitting, enduring tribute to their memories.

Respectfully,

Carolyn Rogers  
Corresponding Secretary  
Union Park Neighborhood Association  
515-979-4966 (C) carolynrogers1710@gmail.com

cc: Ben Page, Parks and Recreation  
Councilman Bob Mahaffey  
Councilman Skip Moore

Encl.



## **Margaret B. Swanson**

One of Des Moines' best known and most respected volunteers, Margaret B. Swanson virtually has "done it all" in her 60-plus years of selfless service as a community activist, volunteer, and philanthropist.

Born, raised and educated through high school in Webster City, Margaret graduated from Iowa State University in 1941 with a B.S. degree in Institution Management. She married Don C. Swanson in 1942. The couple moved to Des Moines in 1949, where they raised three daughters. According to daughter Mara Swanson, their mother taught them "the glass is half full, and in people, there is always good."

Her drive to make a difference in the lives of others kept Margaret active all of her life. When she received the Sertoma Club's 1980 Service to Mankind Award, the award read, in part: "Many people measure their records of volunteer service in the hours they have given; Margaret Swanson measures hers in years."

A longtime resident of the Union Park neighborhood, Margaret was one of the founders of the Union Park Neighborhood Association. She loved her neighborhood and was willing to work hard to improve it. The newly formed group immediately tackled neighborhood concerns about zoning, used car lots, overgrown lawns, and junk. Margaret also served on the board for Des Moines Parks and Recreation, giving a voice to concerns about Union, Oak and Birdland Parks – and, later, projects involving the grounds of the former Riverview Amusement Park.

Margaret was an advocate for the east side. She was instrumental in creating the Des Moines Botanical Center, and locating it on the east side of the river. She was active in the East Des Moines Chamber of Commerce and served on the board of East Des Moines Family Care Center. She devoted countless hours to Iowa Lutheran Hospital, and received the Iowa Lutheran Hospital Distinguished Service Award in 1978. She held leadership positions in Union Park Presbyterian Church, where she was a member from 1949 until her death in March 2011.

Margaret was active city-wide, serving on the boards of such organizations as the Civic Center, Science Center of Iowa, Iowa Methodist Health Foundation, Community Development, Des Moines Vision Plan, Young Women's Resource Center, and the Neighborhood Advisory Board. She also volunteered for divisions of national organizations: Girl Scouts, the American Red Cross, League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women, and Friendship Force.

In 2000, she was inducted into the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame for her work with more than 20 different organizations.

Margaret motivated by example, was a visionary leader, and contributed generously to her community. She had a well-earned reputation for getting things done. She was honored and praised for her work by many leaders and organizations, yet she was humble. She served because she loved helping others.

Naming a shelter in Union Park after Margaret Swanson would be a fitting tribute to her devoted service to the Union Park neighborhood and the City of Des Moines.



## Bill and Nellie Ritchie

Bill Ritchie and his wife, Nellie, lived in the same house in the Union Park Neighborhood for over 50 years. Bill, according to Shannon Ramsey, founding president of Trees Forever, “was an exceptional human being who always wanted to help others, contribute something back, and make his city a more beautiful place.” Nellie always was right there with him – they were virtually inseparable.

Bill’s favorite way of beautifying his neighborhood and city, observed Ramsey, was to plant trees: along the streets, in parks, and by schools and churches. When Bill passed away in April 2007, his obituary stated that he raised funds to plant over 500 new trees in the Union Park area. That milestone was reached in 2005, and The Des Moines Register covered it in a front-page news story.

Bill and Nellie were both active in the Union Park Neighborhood Association (UPNA). Bill was one of the co-founders of UPNA and served as co-chair until about 1995. Nellie was treasurer of UPNA from the group’s inception until her death in December 2005. She also tracked UPNA membership for most of those years, took care of correspondence such as thank-you cards, and at times served as secretary, taking minutes. The couple also attended meetings of other neighborhood groups, such as Des Moines Neighbors and North Central Community Organization (NCCO).

Before the Neighborhood Based Service Delivery (NBSD) program helped with enforcement of city codes and ordinances, there was the “Union Park Complaint Card” developed by Bill – a post card with boxes residents could check that could be sent to the city inspector to report cars parked illegally, junk in the yard, barking dogs, and other code violations. It was a convenient way for neighbors to get the city to take action.

Whenever there was a mass newsletter to get out, Bill orchestrated the entire process, from calling volunteers and finding a place to physically assemble the newsletters, to making sure the publication was stamped, secured, bundled properly and mailed. Nellie was a cheerleader, doing whatever was needed and rallying the volunteers’ spirits. For smaller mailings, Bill and Nellie often would sit at their dining room table and assemble – and then mail – the newsletter themselves. Bill spent hours navigating the U.S. Postal Service bureaucracy to obtain the bulk mailing permit for UPNA that still is in use today.

Bill was quiet and unassuming about his volunteer work, so it is difficult to come up with a comprehensive list of the organizations he helped. He and Nellie belonged to Union Park Methodist Church for several decades, where he served as treasurer and financial advisor and Nellie, as literature secretary. Bill was well respected within the City of Des Moines government and served on various committees. In 2001, Bill and Nellie were honored by Des Moines Neighbors with the Alice Rodine Citizen Award.

Naming a shelter in Union Park after Bill and Nellie Ritchie would be a fitting recognition of this couple’s devoted service to the Union Park Neighborhood and the City of Des Moines.