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WKU residence hall dedicated to Munday, first Black student

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Auburn-native Margaret E. Munday, the first Black undergraduate student to earn an undergraduate degree when she graduated in 1960, listens to be honored during the dedication of Munday Hall, formerly Northeast Hall, Auburn High School and spent over 30 years teaching at every school in Ramey/Grace Ramey ([grammey@bgdailynews.com](mailto:gramey@bgdailynews.com))

Grace Ramey

The legacy of Western Kentucky University's first Black student, Margaret Munday, was enshrined Friday with the dedication of a residence hall in her name.

Dozens of WKU officials, alumni and supporters attended the dedication ceremony outside Munday Hall and the guest of honor, wearing a red coat, closed her remarks by encouraging WKU to "take care of my building."

"This is history today for me and a day for remembrance," Munday said. "Had anyone told me in 1956 when I stepped into these uncharted waters that this would occur today, I would say you don't know what you're talking about. ... I am beyond words, and if I had the voice of a million angels, they would not be able to express my gratitude for all that's being done today."

WKU announced last year its plans to rename the former Northeast Hall in honor of Munday.

Raised in Logan County, Munday enrolled at WKU in 1956, transferring from what was then Kentucky State College after the state's institutions of higher education desegregated.

Munday graduated in 1960, earning a degree in music and returning to her native Logan County to embark on a 35-year teaching career that took her into every school in the Logan County school system.

For 15 years, Munday directed the Union District Youth Choir, consisting of members of more than 30 different churches.

Munday said she was fascinated by the statue outside Cherry Hall when she visited Bowling Green as a child and set her sights on going to WKU, despite the laws of the day making that dream unattainable.

“It’s fitting that this residence hall named after an individual whose persistence forever changed our beloved institution for the better is located near the geographic center of our campus,” said WKU President Timothy Caboni. “It’s my hope that it serves as a daily reminder of the transformative power of having the courage to be first, challenging norms and taking action that paves the way for those who come behind.”

Munday urged the audience to work hard to achieve success, even if it means stepping out of your comfort zone, and compared striving for a life goal to an airplane responding to turbulence, when it climbs and then maintains altitude.



“The example that she set for so many is something that she doesn’t take lightly, but she’s done it with a sense of humor and a sense of grace that is unique to her,” Caboni said after the ceremony.

WKU had previously honored Munday, with a recognition in 1999 from WKU’s Society of African American Alumni and induction in 2012 into the school’s Hall of Distinguished Alumni.

Friday’s dedication, though, will have a more far-reaching effect.

George and C.J... Nichols have established a Munday Hall Scholarship, which will provide funding for two students of color each year who reside in Munday Hall.

WKU regent George Nichols III said he was inspired, humbled and moved by a visit last year to Munday's home in Auburn, as she recalled her time as a WKU student for him.

"I don't think any of us can really appreciate what she did endure privately that never stopped her from being the giant that she is publicly," Nichols said. "She keeps giving back, look at all the students that she's touched, that she leaves an impact on through her living."

Nichols also mentioned WKU's recognition of Jonesville, a thriving Black community in Bowling Green that was dismantled in the 1960s to make way for campus expansion.

On Thursday, the university hosted an event to honor the legacy of Jonesville, and the Kentucky Museum is now displaying a "What Happened to Jonesville?" exhibit that includes a mural by Alice Gatewood Waddell and 15 panels of photographs and stories from interviews with families from Jonesville.

"This exhibit is an opportunity to recognize the achievements and resilience of the Jonesville community," said WKU political science professor Sandra Ardrey, chair of the Jonesville Reconciliation Workgroup, in a news release.

The workgroup was established earlier this year to assess the best ways to honor Jonesville and address issues that remain from the neighborhood's removal.

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