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### Champaign's 1st African-American Police Officer to Receive Honorary Street Name

Story date: Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Champaign's first African-American police officer is being remembered, 20 years after his death. The Champaign City Council gave its preliminary approval last night for an honorary street designation for Allen Rivers Senior. Honorary street signs for Rivers will be installed along three blocks of Park Street on the east end of Champaign. It's the street Rivers lived on for many years.

Rivers joined the Champaign Police Department in 1935, retiring as a sergeant in 1960. His daughter-in-law Eunice Rivers says being the first black member of the force wasn't easy. But she says Al Rivers, Senior earned the respect of his peers.

"For years he worked downtown here on the downtown beat", Rivers told council members. "Directing traffic and writing tickets, that's what he did for years. And then he worked his way up to sergeant. He was just well liked by everybody. All the police officers liked him."


One of those officers was a young Jerry Schweighart, who once lived down the street from Rivers. Mayor Schweighart says he remembers Rivers as a good honorable man.

Councilwoman Gina Jackson sponsored the honorary street designation for Rivers. She says he's one of many notable African-Americans in Champaign worthy of some sort of memorial.

City Council members will take a final vote on the honorary street for Allen at an upcoming meeting.

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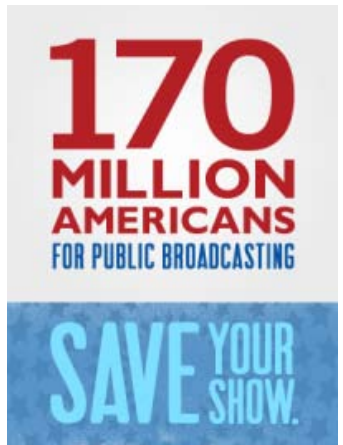
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