



Text File

Introduced: 10/23/2018

Bill No: 2018-1013, **Version:** 1

Committee: City Council

Status: Adopted

WHEREAS, Rev. Jimmy Joe Robinson began his journey in Connellsville, PA in 1927 as a mischievous young man swimming in the Yough River and jumping trains on the local B&O Railroad until he made sports his calling. In high school, he lettered in basketball, football, and track, and earned All-State honors in football and would go on to become the first African-American to play for the **University of Pittsburgh**; and,

WHEREAS, His freshman year would be interrupted by a stint in the Army in 1945. But he would go on to have a stellar career. In 1949, he graduated from the University of Pittsburgh, was drafted 3rd by the Cleveland Browns and was promptly drafted Uncle Sam again in 1949. He played football with the special services at Fort Meyer until his release. Their son, James Jr., was born in 1952 during his second stretch; and,

WHEREAS, Jimmy Joe met **Betty Hord** on a blind date while the two attended the university and would go on to be married in 1949. Later, after being let go by the Montreal Allouettes Canadian football team Jimmy Joe and Betty Robinson lived in Montreal with friends, but would return to Pittsburgh after accepting a call from Christ. Jimmy Joe attended the **Pittsburgh Theological Seminary**, graduated, and became a Presbyterian Minister; and,

WHEREAS, Rev. Robinson accepted a calling, first from Brotherhood Church in Wichita, KA, and then to **Bidwell Presbyterian Church** in 1963. Seeing a need in Manchester, he took his ministry to the streets. With the help of the Bidwell congregation and session and other neighborhood leaders, he fought the slum landlords who were taking advantage of poor Manchester residents, turned back a tide of commercial development that threatened the community; and,

WHEREAS, in the aftermath of the death of Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. and Dr. Robinson would, with the help of residents create two impactful programs: **Bidwell Training Center** in 1968 and the **Bidwell After-School Program** in 1972. The After-School program became a pre-school known as **Training Wheels** in 1979 and started in the basement of Calvary Church, later moving to 1307 Sheffield St. Because Dr. Robinson's granddaughter attended the school and called her Gram it was only a matter of time until all of the children referred to her by the same name. Her new calling card: **Gram**; and,

WHEREAS, Training Wheels encountered rough waves during the late eighties due to high tuition costs and the fact that Dr. Robinson refused to turn away parents who couldn't afford the costs. However, in 1992, Training Wheels was placed under the umbrella of **Manchester Youth Development Center** with Rev. Robinson spearheading the \$1.5 million fundraising drive to make the move possible; and,

WHEREAS, in 1998, the charter school phenomenon burst upon the scene and MYDC was determined to become part of this new wave. Three applicants were ultimately awarded schools for that first group including Manchester Academic Charter School, where it has served hundreds of children for the last 20 years; and,

Introduced: 10/23/2018

Bill No: 2018-1013, **Version:** 1

Committee: City Council

Status: Adopted

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh is thankful for the work of the Robinsons and their years of dedication to the people of the City, does hereby **declare Tuesday, October 23rd, 2018** to be **Reverend & Gram Robinson Day** in the City of Pittsburgh.