



Legislation Text

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File #: 240233, Version: 1

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RESOLUTION NO. 240233

Sponsor: Councilmember Kevin O'Neill

RESOLUTION - Honoring the life and legacy of Nell Quinlan Donnelly Reed for her achievements and contributions to Kansas City.

WHEREAS, in 1916, Nell Quinlan Donnelly Reed established the Donnelly Garment Company, which would eventually become Nelly Don, in Kansas City, Missouri. Nelly Don manufactured over 75 million garments from 1916 to 1978, becoming one of the largest dress manufacturers of its time; and

WHEREAS, named Kansas City's most illustrious businesswoman in 1927, her affordable, fashionable everyday wear garnered customers and fanfare across the nation. Nell became one of the first self-made female millionaires in American history. Her ingenuity led to Nelly Don's early adoption of assembly lines in clothing manufacturing. Her commitment to producing ready-to-wear dresses that flattered a wide range of body types further cemented her legacy as a fashion pioneer; and

WHEREAS, Nelly Don employed thousands of Kansas Citians in its time, more than half of whom were women. Nell was lauded for her dedication to the well-being of Nelly Don employees. She provided an employee pension plan, instituted a medical clinic on the property, created a scholarship fund for employee children, paid tuition for staff pursuing further education, and many additional benefits that prioritized employee welfare. Generations of Kansas Citians have been impacted by the generosity of Nell Reed and continue to enjoy her commitment to the community through her many charitable legacies, including the James A. Reed Memorial Wildlife Area; and

WHEREAS, Nell's legacy of innovation, philanthropy, and entrepreneurial spirit has been preserved by dedicated historian and grandnephew of Nell, Terence O'Malley, who has resurrected her legacy and eternalized her through a book, documentary, musical, and feature film; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF KANSAS CITY:

That the Mayor and Council hereby honor and recognize Nell Quinlan Donnelly Reed's dedication to the Kansas City community and her legacy as one of the most successful female entrepreneurs of the 20th century; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution be spread upon the Minutes of the Council in testimony thereof and that a copy hereof be presented to Nell Quinlan Donnelly Reed's family Terence O'Malley and Ellen Baty, with the respect and appreciation of the Mayor, Council, and citizens of Kansas City.

