

Special thanks to Senator Angel L. Bolques Jr. for his proposal of Bill No. 36-0349 and the other members of the 36th. Legislature for recognizing Mr. Austin M. Petersen for his service to our community.

It is an honor for me to write this letter on behalf of Mr. Petersen who is most deserving of this recognition for the work continues to do in our community. After graduating from the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School Class of 1979, he furthered his education at the Art Institute of New York, Manhattan, New York.

Later on we became colleagues employed at the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School and later the Ulla F. Muller Elementary School respectively where he served as an Art Teacher.

Mr. Petersen was a dynamic and creative art educator with a true passion for fostering students' artistic abilities and appreciation for the arts. One of his most remarkable qualities was his ability to engage students in the creative process, making lessons both enjoyable and educational. He nurtured a supportive and inclusive classroom environment where all students felt valued. He's inspired students to explore their artistic interests while at the same time building essential skills.

He's maintained positive relationships with former students who still greet him with much love and respect.

Throughout the years he's dedicated his all to the Black Utopia Lane wall mural project on the Weymouth Rhymer Highway along with Daniel Gayle, Kuumba Leba Ola-Niyi, and Marcella "Jaribu-Bobo" Jennings-Collier.

This mural has brought to life portions of the history and struggles of our people that were unknown to many. The real job of knowing, embracing and remembering our history remains on the shoulders of families, educators and community to ensure it is passed on to future generations.

Thanks to all involved in making this honor a reality.

Mrs. Marva Thomas-Lake