



Mrs. Mary Williams-Neal

March 22, 1948 - April 2, 2023

Obituary

Our mom Mary Williams-Neal was born in Boyle, Mississippi, on March 22, 1948 to Ethel Lee Chatman and Leandrew “Snook” Williams. Mom was the oldest daughter and the 4th oldest child of fourteen children. Being the eldest girl, she often had to start and stop school and pick cotton to help earn money to support her family. Even then, Mom had a thirst for learning and a desire for a different, better life.

She arrived in Kansas City in 1969. She had three children - Jacqueline Williams, Efrem (Jill) Williams, and Yahna Gibson. She worked at Wayne Miner Health Center as a dental assistant and discovered her passion for serving and helping people. This passion for service determined the path of her life.

Mom worked at Gates & Son's Barbecue for many years. She loved the people who worked with her and the customers who came in. For those who worked with her, she often came across as a hard taskmaster, however, she simply believed in excellence. That same principle of excellence guided her as a single parent. Mom didn't show up at every parent-teacher conference, but we knew what grades to bring home. We knew calls from teachers and principals could only bear

good news

PERIOD. We did not want her coming to the school. Mary Williams wasn't playing, and we knew it. There were many conversations with her later in life, sharing the times we hid information from her to avoid the wrath of Mary!

We moved every year growing up. We went to several schools, sometimes two in a single year. We asked Mom why we moved so much, and she said because of substandard housing. She believed people deserved a safe, decent place to live. That principle would guide her through the next phase of her life. In the summer of 1984, we moved back to Mississippi, where Mom began her career in property management.

As a property manager, Mom was determined to ensure that people lived in safe, decent, quality housing. She started teaching tenants to do more than just reside where they lived, but more importantly to care about their quality of life.

Mom held a profound belief that everyone wanted a safe place to live, some just needed help understanding what that looked like. She empowered them to not only lead but to bring someone else along with them – neighbor to neighbor. Thus began the concept of the Get Ahead Club.

Mom moved back to Kansas City in the spring of 1987, where she continued her work in property management for many years. She worked for several companies but eventually landed at the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance, whose mission of strengthening families through education and housing opportunities aligned

with

her personal values. In 1995, while at KCNA, Mom ran for public office. It was never a desire of hers to run for office, but she felt that she was called to serve in a new capacity, so she did.

Mom represented Kansas City's 3rd District from 1995 until 2003. She served on several committees. Although all were important, if you were to ask her, she would tell you neighborhoods were her baby. She was adamant about empowering neighborhood leaders, helping them understand that our council members and the mayor served "at the pleasure of the people." If you ever had a conversation with her on the subject, she believed that and preached that.

Mom had a lifetime of volunteering. Habitat for Humanity of Kansas City, Central High School working with the Parent Resource Center, and the Salvation Army to name a few. She was appointed a Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioner in 2019 and was still serving the city in that capacity at the time of her death.

Mom was preceded in death by two brothers, J.W. Williams and W.D. Chatman, one sister, Janet Williams, her mother, Ethel Lee Chatman, and her father, Leandrew Williams. She is survived by her husband Allen Neal, and her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and a great- great granddaughter, along with a host of other family members.

Mary Williams-Neal served her community with pleasure and pride. Her legacy was not the roles she filled, nor the offices she served in, but the people she touched.

Funeral services Saturday, April 15, at 11:00am at St. James United Methodist Church. Interment XII Gates Memorial Gardens Cemetery. Visitation 9:00am-11:00am at the church. Services conducted by Lawrence A. Jones & Sons Funeral Chapel. Condolences may be shared on our website.

To send flowers
to the family or plant a tree
in memory of Mrs. Mary Williams-Neal, please visit our floral store.

[Read More](#)

Tribute Wall

AW

“ *A Memorial Tree was planted for Mrs. Mary Williams-Neal
We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ the staff at Lawrence A. Jones
& Sons Funeral Chapels-Missouri - Lawrence A. Jones & Sons
Funeral Chapels
Join in honoring their life - plant a memorial tree*

A Memorial Tree was planted for Mrs. Mary Williams-Neal - May 25, 2023 at 10:49 AM



“ *A Memorial tree was ordered in memory of Mrs. Mary Williams-Neal. Plant a Tree*

May 25, 2023 at 10:49 AM

CS

“ *My condolences to the Family and Friends of Mary Williams Neal during this difficult time. I became aware of "Ms. Mary" when she served as a Councilwoman for Kansas City. I loved to see her rise to speak before the City Council and other groups because she always kept informed of the needs and kept the citizens of the urban core her focus. Mrs. Neal had a Servant's Heart and continued to serve the citizens and children of Kansas City after she left her office. Mary Williams Neal was a Kansas City treasure that will be missed by many.*

Claudia Smith - April 15, 2023 at 07:21 PM

TJ

“ Momma Mary. The works you done speaks for you .The Service you gave speaks for you.The lives you touched speaks for you..I know standing before the Judge his words were Well Done My Good and Faithful Servant. Welcome Home...No words can express how grateful I am for you being part of my life...You will always be in my heart ❤️ .. Rest Well Momma Mary... Your Adopted Daughter.. Tracy

Tracy Johnson - April 07, 2023 at 07:24 PM

BC

“ Mrs. Mary I will always Love and I will miss you. I been around you from a young age, and you did help teach me life. Rest in Jesus Loving Arms.

Barbara Carson - April 06, 2023 at 04:56 PM

LF

“ Ms. Mary was a driving force. Her gentle spirit, tenacity and grace touched the lives of many. She was a champion for families and often shared her wisdom and experience. Her connection to the community and commitment to serve were evident in the impromptu meetings on her front porch. She will be missed. Rest in peace Ms. Mary you have left a legacy.

Lynette Fowler - April 05, 2023 at 05:12 PM

TD

“ Such a pillar in the Chatman & Triplett Family. I'm blessed that we were able to honor you at our last Family Reunion. You have served your family and city. Most of all you served God. You taught and lead by example. Your legacy will live on. Take your crown and robe our queen. Job well done. You shall wear a crown

Tracy S. Davis - April 05, 2023 at 03:48 PM

JD

“ I met Mary at Paseo Baptist Church. I also watched how carefully and diligently she cared for her husband. In June of 2020 I retired from VA Hospital so I saw them both come in. What a precious and elegant lady she was. Always had a smile and a kind encouraging word. To her family I know you were proud to call her mother, sister, aunt and the like. I am so very sorry for your loss and will be praying you.

Jolene Davis - April 04, 2023 at 06:13 PM



“ Mrs Williams -Neal hired me when I worked for Gates. I will miss you Mary Williams-Neal

K - April 03, 2023 at 09:20 PM