

Kingston Teaching Farm Renamed in Memory of Richard “Dick” Pigford

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Family, friends and residents at the dedication to Richard “Dick” Pigford in the Kingston Teaching Farm (Ameera Steward, The Birmingham Times)

By Ameera Steward

The Birmingham Times

Following a moving ceremony in Kingston attended by family, friends and members from some of the city's leading organizations, the legacy of architect Richard I. Pigford, also known as "Dick," will live for generations.

On Wednesday, the Kingston Teaching Farm located on Center Street North was renamed the "Richard Ireland Pigford Memorial Kingston Teaching Farm" in memory of Mr. Pigford, a Kingston Coalition charter member, who passed March 31 of this year.

"Communities were so important to him," said his wife, Dana. "He loved Birmingham, he loved this area, the people that he worked with here he had a great fondness for ... going forward this could be the structure to help other communities that are at risk and even those communities that aren't at risk, teaching them how to come together."

Ella Pigford, his sixteen-year-old granddaughter, remembered helping him in one of the gardens and was touched by the number of people at the ceremony.

"I'm happy that he's done so much for so many communities," she said. "[His work] makes me think that I can do more for my community, it shows me what I can do for my community and it shows me the communities that he cared for, it makes me want to help them more. It inspires me to do more and want to do more when I grow up," she said.

Individuals from a number of organizations who worked with Pigford toward healthier communities were in attendance including UAB Minority Health & Health Disparities Research Center (UAB MHRC), the Kingston Coalition and the Housing Authority of the Birmingham District (HABD).

"This garden was just a tiny piece of what Mr. Pigford did in Kingston," said Tiffany Osborne, director of community engagement for UAB MHRC. "He worked on projects, he invested funds, he helped us go after funds so that we could do programs and projects, there's another community garden that he invested in, just other little things that he did...and I think that that's really important for people to know."

Partnerships



*Jay Pigford, son
(left) and Dana Pigford, wife (right) (Ameera Steward, The Birmingham Times)*

Working in the community, meant people working together with Mr. Pigford, Osborne said.

“[He] was not one to just do, he wanted the residents working alongside of him because this is one of the communities that we work in to try and encourage the community to come work together . . . and Mr. Pigford was good about doing that,” she said. “He connected the neighborhood to representatives from UAB who assisted Kingston to help identify projects and agree on priorities. So, it is no surprise that the teaching farm is located on the Morton Simpson site.”

Adrian Peterson-Fields, HABD COO called the ceremony a “momentous” occasion.

“I grew up in Birmingham, I know what this looked like before and to see [the] teaching farm in honor of and memory of Mr. Pigford” and now to see the fruits of his labor in the teaching farm is crucial, she said.

“We all know that the Kingston area is in a food desert and so these type of foods as we begin to harvest and bring forth; we’ll be able to assist our residents,” said Fields.

Lovie Crawford, president of the Kingston Neighborhood Association, said Pigford was a “true, divine man and his belief was beautifying people...his work speaks for itself, this teaching farm here as well is a dream of his...we will forever remember Dick and all the good things he’s done.”

Beyond The Garden

A lot of Pigford’s work went beyond the teaching garden, said those in attendance.

“He was very interested in violence reduction,” said Dr. Mona Fouad, professor, and director of UAB MHRC. “We were looking at projects to see how can we impact violence reduction so children, and young people, and older people in the community can freely enjoy this beautiful neighborhood.”

Part of Pigford’s legacy, she said, is that the National Institutes of Health has provided UAB with additional funding to create a violence reduction program in Kingston. She added that her department’s Grand Challenge win [part of UAB’s strategic plan that united university activities with community partners] will help the MHRC help bring resources to Kingston.

“When we asked the [Kingston Coalition] what we should do to honor Dick and his work, unanimously everybody voted to [rename the teaching farm] and it’s going to stay forever,” Fouad said. “We’re going to make sure it’s going to stay like this and even get bigger...and impact all the residents here.”

Others in attendance included, Erica Williams, director of educational advancement for the city of Birmingham and Cathy Adamas, board member of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

“I kept thinking that it’s just not fair that he’s not here and then I just heard this voice saying ‘of course he’s here, he’ll always be here,’” said Adams who has known Pigford for 50 years. “This wouldn’t be here without him and it will go on because of him...I am so grateful for every minute



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I was able to spend with him.”

Jay Pigford, Mr. Pigford’s son, said his father would be honored by the dedication.

“He would be more proud that it’s a great honor for the community and what they’re doing here, and creating a legacy for future generations here on this property,” said Jay Pigford. “This seems like a great gift to Kingston but really the Kingston community was such a huge part of his life and a gift to him.”

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