

Willingboro honors Willie R. James Sr.



WILLIAM JOHNSON / FOR THE BURLINGTON COUNTY TIMES

School Superintendent Ronald Taylor shakes hands with the family of Willie R. James Sr. James helped to integrate the Willingboro schools in the 1960s and fought housing discrimination. He died at the age of 95 earlier this month. His family attended the Board of Education meeting to receive a resolution celebrating his life. **Story A4**

Willingboro school district honors W.R. James

By **KELLY KULTYS**
STAFF WRITER

WILLINGBORO — While Willie R. James Sr. passed away earlier this month at the age of 95, his memory lives on in the township.

On Monday, the Board of Education remembered him as a leader and a trailblazer in the community, with a resolution praising his work.

The resolution cites “his momentous contributions to the community of Willingboro, the state of New Jersey and the United States of America.”

The board highlighted many of the achievements James completed in his life, including helping to integrate the township when he “successfully challenged the racist home purchasing policies in the town, then known as Levitt Town, in a landmark court case that was

litigated as far as the New Jersey Supreme Court,” the resolution read.

James wanted to move his family to Willingboro in 1958, after he was stationed at Fort Dix as a part of the Army.

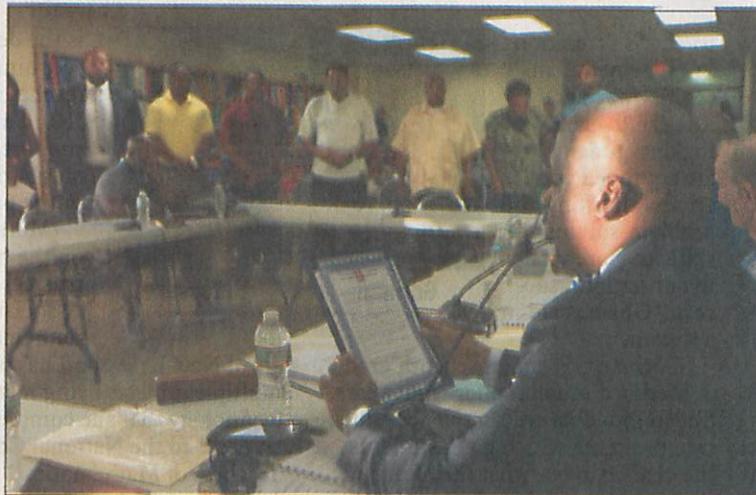
James, who attempted to purchase property in the community built by developer William Levitt in 1958, faced deed restrictions that barred blacks from buying a house. He challenged the ruling through a discrimination suit that went all the way up to the New Jersey Supreme Court.

His suit help integrate the community, but James continued to work for full integration. He and his sons picketed at Holiday Lake off of Route 130 when they were not allowed to use the recreational facilities, according to son Archie James, 75, of Willingboro.

Board members also praised



Willie R. James Sr.



WILLIAM JOHNSON / FOR THE BCT

With the James family standing in the background, Willingboro Schools Superintendent Ronald Taylor reads a resolution Monday honoring the late W.R. James, who helped to integrate the district in the 1960s.

James for his involvement in the community and his work for justice.

James also served as the president of the NAACP's Burlington

County chapter and helped establish the Burlington County Community Action Program, which is a nonprofit that assists low-income residents.

His family was in attendance Monday night to receive the recognition.

“I think it’s an honor for them to remember him,” said his son Fred, 72, of Willingboro. “Dad would be proud.”

James’ other sons, Archie and Willie James’ Jr., and their families were also in attendance to receive the recognition of their father.

“I’m truly honored that you have remembered him in this way,” Fred said on behalf of the family. “Thank you so very, very much.”

James’ family received a standing ovation from the crowd in attendance.

Because of James’ efforts, the district’s Pennypacker Park school was renamed the W.R. James Sr. Elementary School in his honor in 2001.

Kelly Kultys: 609-500-0429;
email: kkultys@calkins.com;
Twitter: @kellykultys