
PROPOSED NAME FOR FACILITY

In accordance with DISD Administrative Regulations for naming of District facilities, the Board has invited written nominations and the following provisions will govern the naming or renaming of school facilities. Nominations can be submitted at any time.

Please note facilities will generally be named for deceased persons who have made a significant contribution to society as may be deemed appropriate by the board, streets or geographic areas within the district, or historical sites.

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1. Existing Building and/or location proposed for naming or renaming

I propose that the Woodrow Wilson Elementary School
(Designation of building and/or location)
1306 East Windsor Drive, Denton, TX 76209
(Address)

2. Proposed Name

be named for: Mae Nell Shephard

3. I am proposing the aforementioned name for the following reasons:

Please select all that apply:

- Deceased DISD staff member Historical Name
 Geographic Name Other

4. Comprehensive biological report (with work history if DISD employee) or INFORMATIONAL REPORT if historic or geographic name:

(Attach extra sheets if needed.)

Born in 1936, Mae Nell Shephard (Benford) grew up in Overton, Texas where her family had to work multiple jobs in order to make a living. She moved to Denton in the summer of 1962 along with her family and became involved in the Denton Women's Interracial Fellowship (DWIF) soon after through encouragement of her friends in the churches.

The DWIF was a group of Black and white women of Denton who began meeting in each others' homes out of a shared concern that the community's schools would soon be forced to desegregate and a shared desire to make those changes proceed smoothly. The first women who attended these gatherings were mothers of school-age children and public school teachers, and as their numbers expanded they organized through their churches. They called themselves the Denton Women's Christian Interracial Fellowship, but dropped "Christian" from the name of their group (DWIF) to signal that they welcomed the inclusion of Jewish Dentonites and others.

In 1964 she met her husband the same year she helped with the general elections. Throughout the 1960s she was very active in the DWIF and served a few times as an officer of the group including organizing the job and help fairs in the latter period of the DWIF.

As the DWIF considered race relations and difficulties that Black people had living in Denton, they started thinking about what could be done. Over time, they took on projects, working to improve race relations in a united effort. They took on these major projects during the next 10 years:

1. Circulated petitions to pave the streets in Southeast Denton, which also led to sewer and water improvements, and followed through on getting many of the streets paved.
2. Convinced landlords to clean up and repair rental properties.
3. Pushed for a city committee on development in Southeast Denton.
4. Provided tutors for students and transportation for black students to DHS.
5. Established a nursery for both Black and white children.
6. Conducted voter registration drives in Southeast Denton.

The DWIF had events to involve their families, including picnics with the children and dinner meetings with the husbands. By the late 1960s, the DWIF was evolving but its emphasis was still on learning more about the community, improving race relations, and improving the life of those in the Black community.

In 1971 she began working as a teacher in the Denton Independent School District where she continued to work for numerous years. Though retired, she continues to serve her community in the Christian Women's Fellowship and babysit her grandkids who call her 'Nana'.

5. Reasons for Nomination

In light of Princeton University removing Woodrow Wilson's name from its public policy school and one of its residential colleges where he once served as a university president (<https://www.princeton.edu/news/2020/06/27/president-eisgrubers-message-community-removal-woodrow-wilson-name-public-policy>), Denton ISD should do the same with its elementary school of the same name.

The school says it is "known for its welcoming atmosphere to all and its appreciation of diversity" and is the district's 1st dual-language program, allowing students to learn from their teachers and each other in English and Spanish.

To have the school named after someone who promoted racist policies and attitudes is in opposition to the school's mission and a disservice to the youth who go there. The Board of Trustees should select someone more deserving and with connections to Denton: Mae Nell Shephard. Many women of the DWIF have been honored previously by Denton organizations and agencies, including fellow DWIF member Catherine Coleman Bell. Ms. Shephard's work benefited generations of children, improved the quality of life for Denton residents, and provided for a more involved citizenry.

6. Name(s) of person(s) or supporting group(s) responsible for nomination:

Dr. Tomás Sanchez Jr.

I have also included a link to a petition requesting a name change for the school in general. At the time of submission of this document, it has 364 signatures.

<https://www.change.org/p/denton-isd-board-change-woodrow-wilson-elementary-school-s-name>

7. Your contact information

Tomás Sanchez, Jr.

(Printed Name)

July 2, 2020

(Date)

1305 East Windsor Drive, Denton, TX 76209

(Address)

802-578-4399

(Telephone number)