

City of Gainesville, Florida
Office of Mayor Harvey L. Ward, Jr.

Proclamation

WHEREAS, public art plays a critical role in connecting the people of Gainesville to their neighbors, to their shared history and cultural heritage, builds social capital, and enriches our physical environment by bringing public spaces to life with a unifying character and imbuing them with community pride; and

WHEREAS, by making our cultural history and heritage a tangible community asset, those Gainesville artists who have spent their lives and energy enriching our public spaces have thus done an inestimable service to all of Gainesville, and thereby occupy an important and unique place in our collective consciousness and social fabric; and

WHEREAS, for thirty years, one of the leading lights of public art in Gainesville has been Blake Harrison, who moved to Gainesville in 1984, and who has been called by the Independent Florida Alligator "the artist who stayed". Beginning in the early 1990s, right down to the present, Blake has painted murals all around Gainesville and northern Florida, from Lake Butler to Pasco County, along with hundreds of portraits, landscapes, and photographs. Blake painted the now-famous memorial murals of Tom Petty that grace several locations around town, including on 34th St. Wall, where he has also maintained the memorial section to the students killed in 1990. His love for the area, energy, selflessness, and willingness to collaborate have enabled him to put an indelible stamp on the area for the benefit of all; and

WHEREAS, Blake Harrison has upheld and extended the best traditions of the local artistic and educational communities through his work in mentorship, education, and charity. He developed his skills as a student at Santa Fe and the University of FL, then began taking every opportunity to create things of public beauty. His work created opportunities for dozens or even hundreds of emerging artists, yet while mentoring young artists, he has always honored his mentors and influences, such as his introduction of famed local artist Lennie Kesl to new generations. Blake also embodied activism-through-art, with frequent and generous donations of both time and work to local charities and charitable events and causes, while always maintaining an open-door policy himself for anyone that might need a place to go; and

WHEREAS, in the forty years since his arrival, Blake has remained dedicated to the cause of building a better, more tolerant, more beautiful, and more forward-looking Gainesville, a Gainesville with a clear sense of its own history and identity, and continues to be a model of dignity, perseverance, patience, and love in the face of adversity. He is a model for individuals who may need an example of how to treat everyone with respect, as well as for those who want to make their communities better places to live, not just better places to work. Blake's vision for Gainesville was one which embodied those most noble of ideals and virtues, and one in which all would share in those limitless possibilities.

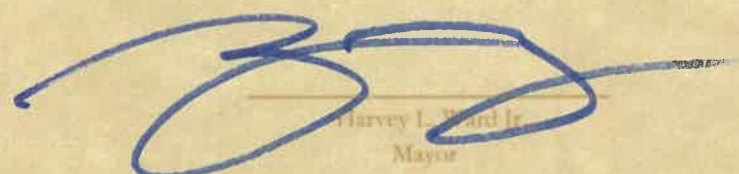
NOW, THEREFORE, I, Harvey L. Ward, Jr., by the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Gainesville, do hereby proclaim July 18, 2024 as

Blake Harrison Day

in the City of Gainesville and invite all our neighbors to join me in commemoration and appreciation of a lifetime of adding beauty and context to our community and invite all our neighbors to celebrate with me his tireless commitment to public art.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the official seal of the City of Gainesville, Florida, this 28th day of June 2024.




Harvey L. Ward, Jr.
Mayor