

Elsie Hillman's support for the Black community remembered

by Christian Morrow
Courier Staff Writer

When Elsie Hillman died last week at 89, she was lauded as a philanthropist and Republican supporter. But her contributions to Pittsburgh's Black community should never be underestimated.

Esther Bush never will. The President and CEO of the Urban League of Pittsburgh experienced Hillman's commitment and dedication first hand.

"She cared about people and Pittsburgh, and was entirely unpretentious—she was real people," said Bush. "She took stands on issues like supporting African Americans, supporting women, supporting gays and lesbians. Every public position she took was because it was the right thing, the human thing to do."

Hillman supported a number of African American organizations, usually quietly. But occasionally, as with her most recent contribution to the Hill House Association—the renovation at

SEE HILLMAN A4

the Kauffman Center creating Hillman Auditorium at—her name was in the forefront.

Cheryl Hall-Russell remembered Hillman on the organization's web page, calling her "an integral part of the establishment of the Hill House Association, a tremendous supporter and champion of this organization for its more than five decades of existence."

"She was one of the first people who reached out to me when I came to Pittsburgh," said Hall-Russell. "She was a kind ear and I had a lot of respect for her. She was one of the last generation of moderates who understood civil exchange, of finding value in the opinions of those who disagreed. That voice will definitely be missed."

New Pittsburgh Courier columnist Louis "Hop" Kendrick said she saved the state Republican Party at a time when it was threatening to go ultra-conservative. She helped get Hugh Scott elected to the U.S. House and later the U.S. Senate, and still



BUSH



KENDRICK



McCLUNG

later helped moderates Bill Scranton and Richard Thornburg win the governorship.

"Scranton had said he's appoint a Black to his cabinet, but after he won his memory got foggy. Elsie reminded him of his promise and Bill Young joined his administration," said Kendrick. "She helped so many people. She was just a genuine, caring person."

Elmer McClung, former aide to Allegheny County Commissioner Larry Dunn, said he was stunned when he heard his old friend had died.

"Her contributions to the Black community were amazing, but she was always very low-key about what she did," he said. "She was sincere."

McClung mentioned a few examples of her sincerity from his campaigns for Pittsburgh council back in 1985 and 1987.

"Back then, I didn't drive—Elsie would come and pick me up and drive me to my appointments," he said. "She held fundraisers for me. One was at the Duquesne Club; another was at the Pittsburgh Golf Club. Those were places that were way off limits to Blacks. She did that."

McClung said Elsie also made sure he was a delegate to the National Convention to elect George H.W. Bush in 1988.

"Elsie Hillman was my friend, in spite of other people's feelings—Black and White—about my interracial marriage at the time. It never bothered her, not once," he recalled. "She said, 'you are you, Elmer.' It was always about support—not grandstanding, just support. She's done so much for the Black community and people will never know. She will be missed."

(Send comments to cmorrow@newpittsburghcourier.com.)



Community calls for new federal voting rules on 50th anniversary

by Christian Morrow
Courier Staff Writer

Celeste Taylor said it was appropriate that the Black Political Empowerment Project celebration of the Voting Rights Act 50-year anniversary was held at the Freedom Corner monument, which is undergoing much needed renovation.

"Much like Freedom Corner, the Voting Rights Act is still under construction," she said. "This work continues. I see voting as one of the most important tools in keeping African Americans relevant. I thank people like Tim Stevens and Alma Speed Fox for continuing this fight. Power to the people."

Taylor joined Stevens and about 50 others, young and old, Black and White, to mark the anniversary at Freedom Corner Aug. 5. Stevens noted that even as they marked the anniversary in Pittsburgh, others were doing so simultaneously in Harrisburg, Philadelphia and Washington, DC.

Pennsylvania ACLU director Vitold Walczak said he was humbled to stand with such people.

"Voting is foundational," he said. "Because if you

can't vote, you can't protect your other rights. In Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, even Washington state, we continue to see games played with redistricting. Voting means ac-

SEE VOTING A4
cess, and we need to update this state's election laws so that every eligible voter can have their voices heard."

League of Women Voters President Annette Shimer said the voting rights fight is not over because for 50 years, those who didn't like the Voting Rights Act have been pushing to undo it.

"We need the act to be made permanent," she said. "We are also pushing for online registration and neutrality in redistricting."

Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh President and CEO Esther Bush said the legacy of Fox, Byrd Brown, Robert Lavelle and others who fought for Afri-

can American rights including the right to vote, is in danger.

"Instead of just celebrating the Voting Rights Act 50 years later, we have to be here to advocate restoring it teeth," she said. "We stand with the national Urban League in promoting the Voting Rights Advancement Act—same day registration, automatic registration, and no-excuses absentee ballots. Join us in a better day for Pennsylvania and for America."

As Stevens thanked all those who spoke, he said he had great hope.

"I have hope because, thankfully, not everyone here is my age," he said. "This isn't just about us old heads. It's about the future, and people like this young lady."

With that, he introduced Brigette Bethea and her 6-month-old son, Chase Patterson.

"This is an important day for me, but more so for my son," she said. "Too often, we don't have a voice. I'm former military, and I will keep voting because it affects him and his ability to vote in the future."

(Send comments to cmorrow@newpittsburghcourier.com.)





NEXT GENERATION—Brigette Bethea of B-PEP with son, Chase Patterson.
(Photo by J.L. Martello)

UPMC Center for
ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

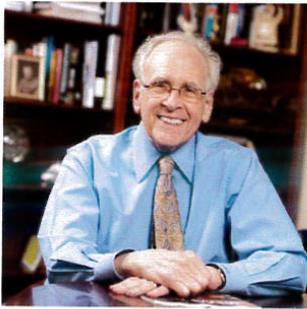
Organizations Women Race
Culture Churches Generations Seniors
Synagogues Local Communities Children

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Immigrants Disabilities Youth Schools
LGBT Faith Newcomers Families Men
Mosques Global Veterans

2015 PARTNERSHIP APPRECIATION EVENT
AUGUST 26, 2015

PARTNER OF THE YEAR AWARDS



LOREN H. ROTH
INCLUSION PARTNER
OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Loren H. Roth Inclusion Partner of the Year Award goes to a department, division or business unit that exemplify being leaders of change to ensure inclusion is integrated into day to day business practices at UPMC. They are self-motivated to lead these efforts, ensure collaboration, consistency, and build upon their goals to meet the growing needs of our diverse patient, employee, member, and community experiences.



ESTHER L. BUSH
COMMUNITY PARTNER
OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Esther L. Bush Community Partner of the Year Award goes to an organization or individual who acts as a strong strategic partner with UPMC through collaborations that help support and strengthen our community social responsibility. They exemplify strong leadership, dedication, and tireless efforts to make the community at large more aware of the diverse needs of our patient, employee, member, and community experiences.