

Eva M. Gaiter Jones

Classroom Resource Packet

1. Student Biography of Eva M. Gaiter Jones
2. Vocabulary List
 - a. Vocabulary words are pulled from the student biography, the actors' scripts, and the Character Information portion of our Guide Script. Words are organized alphabetically.
3. Supplemental Resources (pulled from The Pantagraph)
 - i. "Eva Jones broke racial boundaries, glass ceiling in Bloomington politics" by Candace Summers (March 28, 2021)
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Eva Mae Gaiter Jones (1930-1987)

Eva Mae Gaiter was born in Wilson, Arkansas on March 15, 1930, she was the eldest child of James and Tommie Lee (Dearing) Gaiter. She spent most of her childhood growing up in Frenchmans Bayou, Arkansas.

The family lived in Troy, Arkansas starting in 1940, where James worked on a farm. According to an interview with a friend of Eva's, as a child, Eva spent **scorching** Arkansas summers in fields picking cotton, where she determined her dislike of the experience. This motivated Eva to obtain an education and career. When Eva was not in the field picking cotton, she and her brothers attended a small one-teacher, one-room school.

Eva's parents relocated the family to Bloomington, Illinois in 1944. According to family history, they chose Bloomington because James had a brother who had found more job opportunities when he moved to Bloomington some years earlier. The Gaiters settled into their first Bloomington home at 512 West Jackson Street.

The Gaiter children transitioned into the Bloomington public school system, which was quite different from their previous school in Arkansas. Eva attended eighth grade at the Horatio G. Bent School and the following year, entered Bloomington High School. At BHS, she learned to play the trombone and played in the school band. Additionally, she participated in **Concordia Y-Teens**, a YWCA program that **cultivated** leadership abilities in Black female students.

Jones was also active in the Union Baptist church, where she was a member of the state Sunday school and Baptist Training Union Congress. Outside of her church activities, she volunteered with various YWCA programs such as the YWCA annual holiday observance in 1945. As a teenager and young adult, she developed connections and investments in the Bloomington community. Her high school yearbook quote, "Tho' she is little she is mighty," reflected the determined spirit that she continued to lead her life with after high school. Despite earning the nickname "Pee Wee," Jones was **unwavering** in her commitment to creating change and leadership amid obstacles. She graduated from Bloomington High School in 1948. Following graduation, Jones left Bloomington to attend business school in Chicago, Illinois.

After graduating, Jones was unable to find employment, so she moved back to Bloomington in 1951. From 1951-1952, Jones was enrolled as a full-time student in business education courses at Illinois State Normal University (today Illinois State University). She met her future husband, fellow student James "Jimmie" Allen Baker Jones, during her time at ISNU.

Jimmie was born on April 25, 1931, in Huntsville, Missouri, and raised in Springfield, Illinois. From 1950-1952, Jimmie was enrolled in the health and physical education **curriculum** at ISNU, and also played center on the ISNU men's basketball team. Eva and Jimmie married on June 28, 1952. Jimmie left school to serve in the United States Army during the **Korean War**. Upon his return, Jimmie resumed courses and his position on the basketball team from 1954-1955 but did not earn a degree.

The couple had seven children; Judy, Deborah, Sharon, James Rodney, Ronnie James, Christopher "Cris," and Tawanda "TJ."

Eva Jones remained active in Union Baptist Church. She generously shared her time and musical talents with numerous church programs, primarily working with youth. While Jones served as head of the Youth Department at the church, she helped organize a program that honored African American culture as part of "**Negro** History Week" in February 1963. This public event was held at the church in collaboration with Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church. The program featured music, actors portraying Black historical figures, guest speakers, and choirs.

Jones was actively involved in many community **initiatives** and contributed to various causes through **facilitation** roles and volunteering her musical abilities. While raising her children and volunteering, she was employed in the late 1950s and early 1960s at Illinois Wesleyan University as a **counterworker** before **transitioning** into a career as a **telephone operator** at General Telephone Company. A **colleague** from her time as a telephone operator **fondly** remembered Jones as a “**vibrant**, friendly person and it was easy to like her. Later, I came to admire her **drive** and **perseverance** as she became more involved in community affairs.” Later, Jones became a longtime employee of Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. She began her career at Firestone in 1969 as a **receptionist**, then by 1973 she was a **typing clerk**. In 1979, Jones was promoted to **Traffic Manager** at the company.

Racial tensions had been growing at Bloomington High School and **culminated** in early February 1970 when basketball star Reggie Curry was pulled aside by his basketball coach, Ralph Sacket, and told to “quit the Afro-American Club and cut your hair, or I’ll cut you from the team.” The club was “an all-African American student group that met to develop a better understanding and appreciation of Afro-American **Heritage**.” Additionally, when Curry told his friends about his experience, many of them shared their own experiences of **discrimination** at the school. Curry reported the incident to his high school counselor, James Lyle (who, **incidentally**, was the only Black teacher at the school), who then reported it to the principal. And while there were no **consequences** to Coach Sackett, Lyle was let go at the end of the school year.

In response to the growing number of discriminatory instances and frustrated by the lack of respect and understanding for their culture, a group of students, many of whom were members of the Afro-American club, **boycotted** classes on February 26, 1970. They developed a list of **grievances** and requests to present to the school administration. When these grievances became public, a group of white students publicly **mocked** their requests and started a fight. While the incident ended quickly, racial tensions at the school were coming to a **boiling point**.

Jones knew that actions would speak louder than words. In the spring of 1970, Jones was among ten candidates running for two **vacant** seats on the Bloomington Board of Education. Her campaign focused on “bridging the communications gap,” so that she could help build better schools (especially for five of her children who were all attending District 87 schools at the time) and a better community for all. She especially urged more **transparency** from the school board and allowing the public to participate more fully. In Jones’ opinion, “a board that completely isolates itself from the public will not be aware of needs and the feelings of the community.”

While she lost that first election, Jones was determined to obtain a seat, especially since racial tensions continued to increase at the high school, with students not feeling safe at their own school. She ran again in 1971, and this time Jones was the top vote-getter, winning a seat on the school board.

Committed to **advocacy** for **underrepresented** voices, Jones was willing to **dissent** from the majority and present alternative solutions to district issues during her **tenure** on the school board. When new legislation proposals were brought before the **Illinois General Assembly**, Jones was the only board member who spoke in favor of **transparency** which required board members and candidates to report sources and amounts of their income.

While much of her time was devoted to her responsibilities as a member of the school board, Jones remained active in other community groups and causes. In 1972, Jones served as coordinator for the Minority Voter’s Coalition. This group aimed to assist underrepresented communities in registering to vote for upcoming local, state, and national elections. She

acknowledged the power of voting and representation, stating it is “only through organization that **minorities** can wield the necessary political **clout** to effect desired change.”

In the spring of 1974, Jones was re-elected to the Bloomington Board of Education for a second three-year term. During this term, she served on the board’s education budget committee and the program accounting and insurance committee. Issues that District 87 faced during her second term included a severe budget **deficit**, **bankruptcy**, teacher cuts, continued tensions with the teachers’ union, school closures, and relocation of students.

Jones endured criticisms such as being labeled a “**sellout**” by other members of the Black community. However, despite increasing controversy within the District, Jones persisted in her ideals. In April 1976, four of the 11 total Black teachers in District 87 were laid off among the 74 total teachers cut that year to save district expenses. William O’Neal, the dean of students at Bloomington Junior High, raised concern about potential employment discrimination. He reasoned the unequal opportunity for seniority, as the District was not actively looking to hire Black teachers 10 years ago. O’Neal, Eva Jones, and the four affected teachers met with Superintendent Stimeling to discuss the Bloomington Education Association (teacher’s **union**) contract. O’Neal was particularly concerned because three of the four Black teachers being laid off were at BHS, which would leave no Black teachers at the high school if the cuts remained. “The black youngsters at the high school won’t have anyone to identify with,” O’Neal stated. However, the administration’s hands were tied because of provisions in the BEA’s contract, which requires staff reductions be made on the basis of **seniority**. The teachers would have to file formal complaints with the **commission** before any investigation. Stimeling stated that Bloomington did not have an **affirmative action** plan and had never felt the district had discriminated or that they needed to have one. He also reported that one of the Black teachers was on the top of the “call-back” list, likely to be rehired.

Jones was successfully re-elected to a third three-year term on the school board in 1977, crediting the **integrity** she had demonstrated in previous years as her reason for re-election. She was also **unanimously** elected school board President and served from 1977-1978, becoming the first Black school board president for the district. During her third term, Jones continued to address concerns of all voices, listening to parents, teachers, and students in her commitment to the district.

In the fall of 1978 Jones declared her intent to run for a position on Bloomington City Council the following year. She sought a four-year term on the council, expressing that her **ambition** was to serve the public. Jones believed her experiences on the school board would be valuable in making council decisions that affected both the city and schools. She won a seat by a margin of 11 votes, winning runner-up to incumbent Jesse Smart in the primary. Both Jones and Smart were highly endorsed as qualified candidates for the two open **at-large** City Council positions due to their extensive experience serving Bloomington. With this win, Eva Jones became the first Black person elected to the Bloomington City Council. However, what should have been a four-year term for Jones would only be a two-year term because on the same ballot was a proposal for a return to the **ward system** of government in Bloomington. She ran again in 1981, this time seeking to represent the Third ward of Bloomington but lost by a 2-to-1 margin.

In 1983, Jones won several recognitions for her dedicated efforts to promote and advance human relations and human rights. That year she received the Bloomington-Normal Human Relations Award from the **Bloomington Human Relations Commission**, recognized at the 7th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. program at Illinois State University on March 19. At the end of the year, Jones was one of eight people statewide to receive the Illinois **Municipal Human**

Relations Association Inc. annual award. She was also recognized in her active membership in community organizations such as the YWCA, the **League of Women Voters**, and the **United Way**.

After a life filled with service to her community and church, Eva Jones passed away at Bloomington's Mennonite Hospital on July 19, 1987, at the age of 57 after a long battle with cancer. Her funeral was held at Eastview Christian Church, with the Reverend Frank McSwain officiating. She was buried at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington, Illinois.

Vocabulary

Advocacy (adverb): the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal: the act or process of advocating something

Affirmative action (adjective): the practice or policy of favoring individuals belonging to groups regarded as disadvantaged or subject to discrimination

Aldermanic (noun): a member of a city legislative body

Ambition (noun): an ardent desire for rank, fame, or power

At-large (adjective): at liberty; escaped or not yet captured

Bankruptcy (noun): utter failure or impoverishment

Bloomington Human Relations Commission (organization, noun): Mission Statement: To protect the right of all citizens to equal opportunity for education, employment, housing, public accommodations and financing; To foster tolerance and mutual respect through education and public awareness programs; To deter and prevent unlawful discrimination through the implementation and enforcement of the Bloomington Human Relations Ordinance.

Boiling point (noun): the point at which anger or excitement breaks out into violent expression

Boycotted (verb): to engage in a concerted refusal to have dealings with (a person, a store, an organization, etc.) usually to express disapproval or to force acceptance of certain conditions

Clout (noun): pull, influence

Colleague (noun): an associate or coworker typically in a profession or in a civil or ecclesiastical office and often of similar rank or status : a fellow worker or professional

Commission (noun): a government agency having administrative, legislative, or judicial power

Consequences (noun): something produced by a cause or necessarily following from a set of conditions

Concordia Y-Teens (organization, noun): a leadership group for Black female students through the YWCA

Counterworker (noun): also known as a counter person, counter attendant, cashier, or clerk, assists customers at a business with a service counter

Culminated (verb): to reach the highest or a climactic or decisive point

Cultivated (verb): raised or produced under cultivation

Curriculum (noun): the courses offered by an educational institution

Deficit (noun): an excess of expenditure over revenue

Discrimination (noun):

a. prejudiced or prejudicial outlook, action, or treatment

racial *discrimination*

b. the act, practice, or an instance of discriminating categorically rather than individually

Dissent (verb): to differ in opinion

Drive (noun): an impelling culturally acquired concern, interest, or longing

Facilitation (adverb): the act of facilitating: the state of being facilitated

Fondly (adverb): in a fond manner: affectionately

Grievances (noun): the formal expression of a grievance: complaints

Heritage (noun): something possessed as a result of one's natural situation or birth

Illinois General Assembly (organization, noun): the state legislature of Illinois, created by the first Illinois Constitution adopted in 1818

Incidentally (adverb): in an incidental manner: not intentionally

Inequity (noun): injustice, unfairness

Initiatives (noun): energy or aptitude displayed in initiation of action

Integrity (noun): firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values

Korean War (historical event): a conflict (1950–53) between North Korea, aided by China, and South Korea, aided by the UN with the U.S. as the principal participant

League of Women Voters (organization, noun): nonpartisan, grassroots organization working to protect and expand voting rights and ensure everyone is represented in our democracy. They empower voters and defend democracy through advocacy, education, and litigation, at the local, state, and national levels.

Minorities (noun): a part of a population thought of as differing from the rest of the population in some characteristics and often subjected to differential treatment

Mocked (verb): to treat with contempt or ridicule

Negro (adjective, derogatory): an outdated and offensive term referring to people of Black African heritage

Perseverance (noun): continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition: the action or condition or an instance of persevering: steadfastness

Receptionist (noun): a person employed to greet telephone callers, visitors, patients, or clients

Scorching (verb): to cause intense heat or mental anguish

Sellout (verb): to betray one's cause or associates especially for personal gain

Seniority (adjective): a privileged status attained by length of continuous service (as in a company)

Unwavering (adjective): continuing in a strong and steady way

Telephone operator (noun): a person who works at the switchboard of a telephone exchange

Tenure (noun): the act, right, manner, or term of holding something (such as a landed property, a position, or an office) *especially:* a status granted after a trial period to a teacher that gives protection from summary dismissal

Traffic Manager (noun): office employee, especially an executive, who routes items of business within a company

Transitioning (verb): a change or shift from one state, subject, place, etc. to another

Transparency (noun): the quality or state of being transparent

Typing clerk (noun): one employed to keep records or accounts or to perform general office work

Unanimously (adverb): being of one mind

Underrepresented (adjective): inadequately represented

Union (noun): a confederation of independent individuals (such as nations or persons) for some common purpose

United Way (organization, noun): a program in which communities tackle tough challenges and work with private, public, and nonprofit partners to boost education, economic mobility, and health resources

Vacant (adjective): being without content or occupant

Vibrant (adjective): pulsating with life, vigor, or activity

Ward system (noun): an electoral district of a city council or town board, created for the purpose of providing more direct representation, from which one or more council members are elected

Eva Jones broke racial boundaries, glass ceiling in Bloomington politics

Candace Summers, March 28, 2021



Eva Jones is seen here during a particularly tense moment during the August 16, 1978 meeting between the Bloomington Education Association (teacher's union) and the Bloomington Board of Education. Jones was the only board member in favor of reopening negotiations with the BEA for a master contract for the 1978-1979 school year at that meeting.

“Tho’ she is little, she is mighty.” That is how Eva Gaiter Jones described herself in the 1948 *Aepix* yearbook when she was a senior at Bloomington High School. And that quote certainly seems fit for a woman who never turned away from challenging situations or tough decisions. Certainly, her three terms as a member of Bloomington’s District 87 Board of Education were filled with challenges—both for her as a woman of color and the entire Bloomington community.

Jones was born in Frenchmans Bayou, Arkansas on March 15, 1930 to James and Tommie Lee (Dearing) Gaiter. When Jones was a child, she picked cotton during the hot Arkansas summer months, which she despised. It was this experience that led Jones to want more for herself, and to obtain an education and a career. In 1944, when she was fourteen years old, her family moved to Bloomington, where she attended Bloomington High School. While at BHS she became a member of the Concordia Y-Teens, which was a leadership group for Black female students through the YWCA. During her time with the Concordia Y-Teens, Jones helped plan events and engaged in leadership training classes. This experience likely helped develop her life-long interest in politics and local affairs.

After graduating BHS in 1948, Jones went on to attend Cortez Business College in Chicago. The Chicago branch of this school was founded in 1941 and was one of the first Black-owned business schools in the nation that prepared African Americans for business and civil service.

Students like Jones were trained in “commercial subjects including typewriting, shorthand, filing, and all related subjects as well as preparation for Government Civil Service Examinations.” Many graduates who earned two-year business certificates from Cortez obtained jobs in the federal government or went on to college.

After Jones graduated from Cortez, she returned to Bloomington and took additional courses at Illinois State Normal University. She worked as a telephone operator for a time and eventually began a long and successful career at Firestone Tire and Rubber Company in Normal (first as a receptionist and administrative assistant, before being promoted to traffic manager). In 1952, she married James Jones, a Springfield native and graduate of ISNU. The couple settled in Bloomington and eventually had seven children.

Eva Jones very much cared about young people, especially young members of the Black community in Bloomington-Normal. While she was a member of Union Baptist Church, she was the general chairperson of the Young People’s Day in 1953. She eventually became the director of the entire Youth Department at Union Baptist. She also took an active role in Bloomington Public Schools (which all of her children attended) by joining the PTA and serving on the Family Service Board Advisory Council to the school board. But Jones wanted to do more and knew that she could help build better schools and a better community for all.

So, in 1969 she announced her candidacy for the Bloomington Board of Education. She was one of ten candidates (and the only person of color) running for two vacant seats. She ran on the platform of “bridging the communication gap.” She felt that breakdowns in communication were at the root of many problems in the school district, in particular the growing racial tensions at Bloomington High School that came to a head from February to May 1970. (It was during that period of time that police in riot gear were called in to keep the peace between Black and white students at BHS. Black students also boycotted classes and demanded for more Black teachers and a Black studies program to be created). Jones wanted to bring people together at the same table. She wanted everyone to work together “with understanding and a deep interest in a well-balanced and meaningful education for every one of our children.” Jones felt that the school board should represent “ALL” families in Bloomington.

Though she was defeated in the April 1970 elections (coming in fourth), she did not let that deter her and announced her candidacy again that fall. This time around, Jones was the top vote getter in the Bloomington school board elections, earning one of the three open seats in 1971. With this win, she became the first person of color elected to a position on the Bloomington Board of Education, and at the time was the only woman serving on the board.

Jones’s term began one year after the only teachers’ strike in District 87’s history. The 1970s was one of the most tumultuous eras in the history of the District. Animosity between teachers, administrators, and board members was intense. Even within each group, differences of opinion appeared, and it took many years before labor strife eased in the district. Jones was re-elected twice (1974 and 1977), spending one of her final two years on the board as the first Black board president.

Jones resigned her position on the school board on April 1, 1979 to pursue a seat on the Bloomington City Council. That same year, she ran for an at-large aldermanic seat and won by a tight margin of just eleven votes. With this win, Jones became the first person of color to sit on the City Council. However, in that same election, voters unexpectedly approved a proposition to reestablish the ward system, which meant Jones's term was cut short by two years. Jones attempted another run for City Council, running for Ward 3 alderperson in 1981, but was defeated. She set her sights even higher and became the first Black woman to run for mayor in 1984, but lost in the primary. Nevertheless, her efforts in local politics paved the way for many women who came after her to serve in elected positions.

In addition to her elected positions, Jones worked on several local projects such as organizing a west side baseball league for children from low-income families, and served on the YWCA board, the League of Women Voters, the United Way, and several professional organizations and church positions at Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church. In 1972, she was one of the co-founders of the Bloomington-Normal Minority Voters Coalition, which worked "to improve relationships among and between members of various political, social, cultural, religious, ethnic, and professional groups in the community."

In 1983, Jones's involvement in local civic and governmental affairs was recognized when she received the Bloomington-Normal Human Relations Award. That same year she was one of eight people statewide to receive the Illinois Municipal Human Relations Association's annual award.

Eva Jones will be one of 20 women featured in the program "Artists, Advocates, Acrobats, & More! Women Who Made McLean County History" on Tuesday, March 30 at 7:00 p.m. This free, online program will feature such women as Florence Fifer Bohrer, the first woman Illinois State Senator; Antoinette Concello, the "Queen of the Flying Trapeze;" and Sister Mary Antona Ebo, a Civil Rights activist who marched in Selma, Alabama in 1965. To register for this Zoom presentation, visit www.mchistory.org.

“Four women paved way to Bloomington City Council”

Torii Moré, March 7, 2021



Eva Jones, circa 1979

March is Women’s History Month. With the recent death of Mayor Judy Markowitz, the first and only woman to be elected mayor in the City of Bloomington, and current candidate Jackie Gunderson running for the seat, some may wonder about other local women who paved the way in Bloomington electoral politics.



Helen McCurdy, circa 1944

Who was the first woman to run for an elected seat in Bloomington municipal government? That distinction belongs to Helen Clark McCurdy (1866-1962) who ran for “commissioner” in 1915. In 1914 Bloomington citizens voted by referendum to change from an aldermanic form of government to a commission form. Under the aldermanic form, one mayor and a board of 14 men—two from each of the seven wards—governed the city. The change to commission form elected the heads of five city departments: Mayor and Commissioner of Public affairs, Commissioner of Public Health and Safety, Commissioner of Public Streets and Improvements, and Commissioner of Public Property. Out of a pool of 48 men (one of them African American), Helen McCurdy was one of the 10 candidates to make it through the primary and on to the general election. (Who was the African American candidate, you ask?)

That was Dr. Eugene Covington, who received death threats against him and his entire family for entering the race. He did not gain enough votes to make it past the primary).

In January 1915 McCurdy’s candidacy was described in the Pantagraph as “something of a sensation” and a later article noted that, as far as they were aware, she was the first woman to be a candidate for a commissioner position in the entire country. McCurdy’s advertisements spoke to what she was up against, with the tag line in many of her campaign ads in the Pantagraph stating, “Give Helen Clark McCurdy A Chance.” McCurdy was born and raised in Bloomington and was a very active leader in community organizations, including the Civic League and the Women’s Club. Letters to the editor in favor of McCurdy came from prominent men including Arthur Pillsbury and Joseph W. Fifer, and many expressed support for McCurdy for the role of public health and safety commissioner. One supportive (albeit patriarchal and condescending) letter suggested that it was “courageous” and “appropriate” for McCurdy to seek the role of, as he described, “city housekeeper,” and added that “no greater failure can be possible” than the men who have held the position so far. With 1421 votes from men and 1960 votes from women in the general election, McCurdy came in seventh, so she was not elected to one of the commissioner positions. McCurdy, who lived with her husband Guy on the 100 block of S. Clayton St., never ran for office again. She is buried at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.

Research shows that after McCurdy, no women ran for city council for 28 years. In that time, Bloomington changed back to the aldermanic form of government. Helen Rorabach (1905-1967) was the first woman to run for alderperson, throwing her name in the hat for Ward 1 in 1943. She lost the election, with the incumbent alderperson Henry Welch gaining 433 votes, and Rorabach 193. Rorabach attended, photographed, and wrote about social events in the Twin Cities in her job as the Social Editor at the Pantagraph. Her photograph of Ed Sullivan at a State Farm Founders Day celebration won a third-place Illinois Associated Press award in 1955. She was heavily involved in many local organizations and clubs such as Playcrafters (an “experimental theater group”), and played tennis and golf. She only ran for office once. Rorabach is buried in Park Hill Cemetery.



Helen Rorabach, circa 1941

The first woman to run and win elected office in the City of Bloomington was Margaret Chasson in 1969. At that time Bloomington had a council-manager form of government, where a professional city manager was under the direction of a mayor and council. With 4,397 votes, Chasson won one of two at-large seats on city council, gaining almost 2,000 more votes than the third-place candidate.



Margaret Chasson, circa 1969

In 1973 Chasson also became the first woman to run for Mayor. In her vision for the city, she believed the most important asset to a mayor was “the determination to put the public interest first” and wanted to ensure “that all laws will be uniformly enforced – that no group will be singled out either for stricter enforcement or for lax enforcement.” She lost that race. Chasson went on to head the Bicentennial Arts Festival Committee and established the McLean County Arts Center. Her hard work in the local arts scene was recognized when she was nominated for a governor’s arts award in 1978. Chasson was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, received a master’s degree in mathematics from the University of Missouri, and moved to Bloomington-Normal in 1960. She lived with her husband Robert Chasson on the 900 block of Mercer Ave., but moved out of town in the 1980s.

The first Black person to successfully win elected office in Bloomington was Eva Jones (1930-1987). Jones was the first Black person to win a seat on the Bloomington Board of Education in 1971. During her eight years as board member and then as president, she was the only person of color and the only woman. In 1979 she ran for an at-large alderperson seat again, this time winning by a very close margin of 11 votes. In that election, voters also approved a proposition to reestablish a ward system, which meant Jones’s term was cut short by one year. She ran for Ward 3 alderperson in 1981, but lost by 193 votes. In 1984 Jones became the first Black woman to run for mayor, but she lost in the primary.

Born in Arkansas, Jones moved to Bloomington in 1944 when she was 14 years old. She resided on the 300 block of Vista Drive with her husband and seven children, maintaining her career at Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. throughout her public service. Jones died of cancer at the age of 57 and is buried at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery. She was featured on the Museum’s Evergreen Cemetery Walk in 2006.

To learn about more women who broke glass ceilings, join us for a virtual program, “Artists, Advocates, Acrobats, & More! Women Who Made McLean County History” on March 30, 2021, at 7pm! Register at mchistory.org.