

June 1, 2018

## History Center Exhibit Celebrates Local African American Firsts

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BLOOMINGTON, IN – The Monroe County History Center welcomes its newest exhibit **Breaking the Color Barrier: Bloomington's Firsts** on Friday, June 1st with a free reception on Friday, June 8 from 6:00-8:00 pm and tours beginning at 5:30pm. The exhibit celebrates the triumphs of Bloomington's African American citizens and the vast accomplishments achieved throughout the county's two hundred years. The exhibit runs until October 12, 2018 and is open to the public.

"Bloomington has a deep rooted African American history, this exhibit highlights many of the great firsts our citizens accomplished within our community. It is those often historic achievements that are woven through images, locations, events and culture that make this exhibit something to truly celebrate" said Susan Dyar, director of the Monroe County History Center. The exhibit features 29 citizens dating from 1870 to present and includes such notable firsts as Marcellus Neal, the first African American graduate of Indiana University, Bill Garrett, first African American to play basketball at IU and in the Big Ten Conference, and Elizabeth Bridgwaters, Bloomington's first African American school board member to name a few.

"It is the contributions of those individuals, as well as our modern day citizens who are still creating firsts like Elizabeth Mitchell, Chair of the History Center African American Committee, who has worked to engage the community to educate many who are unfamiliar with the stories," Dyar added. The location of the present history center itself is steeped in African American history with the ground originally used for the first "Colored School" in 1874 which eventually became Bloomington's first segregated grade school. The location was later sold to build the Carnegie Library in 1915.

Hours for the exhibit beyond its opening night are Tuesday – Saturday 10am-4pm. Admission is \$2 for adults, \$1 for ages 6-17 and free for ages 5 and under. The Monroe County History Center is a non-profit 501c3 whose mission is to collect, preserve, research, interpret and present the genealogy, history and artifacts of Monroe County, Indiana and provide an accessible learning environment for all to enjoy.

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