

Addie Byrd Byers

1906 - December 2, 2003

Bravery



“The black community didn’t ask to pay taxes, either.” Addie Byrd Byers

Addie Byrd Byers was a celebrated teacher, advocate, and activist in the Savannah community. She is responsible for formalizing changes allowing African American children to have access to the public library in Georgia. At a time when she could have lost her job or worse, she confronted a system to make change. Her **super skill of bravery** provided the pathway for African American children to check out books, access resources and interact with educational materials in a non-segregated library system of Georgia. When a librarian told Byers that black children weren’t allowed because they had “never asked,” Byers responded that, “the black community didn’t ask to pay taxes, either.”¹

Byers, working with the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)*, formalized the library access request for all minorities and was successful and ultimately recognized for her courage, care and determination in an effort to provide better educational opportunities for African American children.

Born in 1906, Byers was the daughter of Samuel and Rena Byrd, of Liberty County, Georgia. The family moved to Savannah after Byrd’s fifth

grade year. She graduated junior high school as valedictorian of her class. Byrd went on to complete her high school education at Knoxville College in Tennessee, and afterwards, returning to Savannah to attend Savannah State University, earned her bachelor’s degree. She continued her education at Columbia University and returned to Savannah Georgia, once again, to teach in a local high school.

Byers went on to become a highly regarded teacher and introduced many of her students to *NAACP*, as well. She became a member of the Chatham County board of Education and was a part-time teacher at her alma mater, Savannah State University. She was a very active member of the *NAACP*, becoming the second Vice-President of the Savannah branch. She became a member of the Chatham-Effingham-Liberty Regional Library Board and continued to support equal access to all citizens.

Addie Byrd Byers died at her home on December 2, 2003, leaving a legacy of achievement that so many children continue to benefit today.

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