

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reuben K. Harpole

PERSON

Harpole, Reuben, 1934-

Alternative Names: Reuben K. Harpole;

Life Dates: September 4, 1934-

Place of Birth: Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

Residence: Milwaukee, WI

Work: Milwaukee, WI

Occupations: Academic Administrator; Foundation Executive

Biographical Note

Academic administrator and foundation executive Reuben K. Harpole was born on September 4, 1934 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Reuben K. Harpole, Sr. and Mardree Johnson Harpole. He graduated from North Division High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and earned his B.S. degree in elementary education in 1978 from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Harpole served at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Continuing Education for thirty-one years as a senior outreach specialist at the University Center for Urban Community Development. In 1998, he went to work as a program officer for the Helen Bader Foundation (now Bader Philanthropies, Inc.), where he spearheaded the selection of 758 grants totaling more than \$6.4 million. In 2007, Harpole established the Reuben K. Harpole Jr. Education Scholarship at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, which invested \$19,000 in the college education of young African American men interested in teaching.

Harpole served as a civil rights worker and community leader who led development efforts for several Milwaukee institutions including the Black Holocaust Museum, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Center for Urban Community Development, and the Harambee Community Development Corporation. Harpole is credited for his contributions to the founding of more than twenty-five community centers and programs that promote education including Milwaukee Public Schools' Homework First program, the Milwaukee Community Sailing Center, 100 Black Men of Greater Milwaukee, and Bader Philanthropies' Community Partnerships for Youth.

He was the recipient of numerous awards and honors for his dedicated civic work and promotion of education. In 2005, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee awarded Harpole an honorary doctorate degree of humane letters for his work in improving Milwaukee communities. On September 21, 2009, he was honored as the official “Paramount Chief of Milwaukee” and received a portion of Second Street, near North Avenue. Milwaukee named the section of Second Street, “Reuben K. Harpole, Jr. Avenue.” In 2015, Harpole and his wife, were awarded the first Distinguished Educator of the Year award at Celebrate Teachers & Teaching. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Alumni Association honored Harpole with its Community Service Award in 2016.

Harpole and his wife, Mildred Cowan Harpole, have two children: Annette and John.

Reuben Harpole was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 21, 2017.

Related Entries

Roosevelt Middle School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Ninth Street Elementary School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

North Division High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Milwaukee Area Technical College [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Senior Outreach Specialist

Helen Bader Foundation [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Asentu Rites of Passage Institute, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Milwaukee Star [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Advertising Manager

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Milwaukee Urban League [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

