



***The late Lawton C. Johnson in a photo taken June 15, 2005, at the naming ceremony of the Lawton C. Johnson Summit Middle School in his honor. Behind him stands his portrait, painted by a Summit artist for the dedication. The portrait hangs in the office of the school.***

### ***Schools, community mourn the passing of Lawton C. Johnson***

SEPTEMBER 15, 2009 - It was an unprecedented tribute for an unprecedented term of service. When the Summit Board of Education voted in September 2004 to change the name of Summit Middle School to Lawton C. Johnson Summit Middle School, it was an honor never before accorded an employee of the school district. But then, no employee had ever before given 50 years of service to the schools. Mr. Johnson had worked in the middle school office for half a century – he started right after graduation from Summit High School and continued until his retirement in August 2007.

Sandra Bloom, who was president of the board of education in 2004, said at the time that Lawton's service to the community and to the schools warranted such an extraordinary recognition. A gala celebration and formal naming ceremony was held at the school the following spring. By then, Mr. Johnson had already been diagnosed with the illness that he would fight for the next four years, but he brought the house

down with his warm and witty acceptance speech for the honor he proudly received. "I really love answering the phone now," Mr. Johnson told a colleague following the re-naming of the school. "Hello, Lawton C. Johnson Summit Middle School, Lawton C. Johnson speaking."

Mr. Johnson retired from his beloved job at his namesake school without much fanfare. He said he had received all the accolades anyone deserves at the time of the naming ceremony. He kept in touch with many of his co-workers, who visited him often, during hospital stays and during his final months in a care facility.

Lawton C. Johnson passed away on September 14, 2009, following a long illness.

Flags at the Summit Public Schools will fly at half-staff this week in his honor. He will be remembered and missed for much longer.



*Following is the announcement that Lawton C. Johnson Summit Middle School Principal Matt Block made to the students on September 14:*

Each day we are proud to walk through the doors of a great middle school, and we feel that pride each time we say our school's name: Lawton C. Johnson Summit Middle School. Sadly, Lawton Corbin Johnson, our school's namesake, passed away early this morning.

Mr. Johnson was a product of the Summit Public Schools. He began his career here as a student at Summit Junior High School, and then Summit Senior High School, both of which were located in this building at the time. When he was an eighth grader sitting right where you sit today, he began doing community service by volunteering his time helping in the school office. For the next 52 years, Mr. Johnson continued his work in the school office, working his way up to the position of the Summit Middle School office manager, a position he served beginning in 1963. He held this position until he retired two years ago in 2007. While his title was office manager, Mr. Johnson's generosity, kindness, and his caring and helpful nature extended throughout the school building, the entire district, and into the community of Summit.

Throughout his 52 years here, from 1954-2007, Mr. Johnson dedicated himself to serving others, especially the residents of Summit, and the staff and students of "his" middle school. He did this each day with a positive attitude, a friendly demeanor, and a willingness to "go the extra mile" to help someone in need of assistance. He assisted students, teachers, and administrators with anything they needed. No favor was too great, and no task was too small. He embodied dedication and hard work by being the first one to arrive to school each morning and the last one to go home each evening, sometimes working through the weekend, if necessary, in order to get

the job done. Amazingly, for 47 of his 52 years, Mr. Johnson did not miss one day of work.

This week the Summit Schools' flags will be at half-staff, and there will be a picture of Mr. Johnson displayed in our concourse. While many of our students did not know him personally, many of our staff members did. Those who did know him will remind you what a truly great man he really was. He was such a great man that four years ago, our board of education decided to name our school after him. After they changed the name from Summit Middle School to Lawton C. Johnson Summit Middle School, Mr. Johnson commented, "It's very nice to see my name up on the building, but I've always considered it my school." The best tribute we can give to Mr. Johnson is to continue his legacy of making the service to others a principle we all live by each day. Please join me for a moment of silence as we remember the man whose school we are proud to attend each day.