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## Library Dedication Ceremony Honors Leroy R. Coles, Jr - Lifelong Civil Rights Advocate and Leader of the Buffalo Urban League



### MEDIA RELEASE

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### Library Dedication Ceremony Honors Leroy R. Coles, Jr

*Lifelong Civil Rights Advocate and Leader of the Buffalo Urban League*

The former East Delavan Branch Library in Buffalo will be officially dedicated and renamed today as the Leroy R. Coles, Jr. Branch Library during a public ceremony with members of the extended Coles family, elected officials and the community. Located at 1187 East Delavan Avenue near Bailey Avenue, this Buffalo & Erie County Public Library branch, which opened in 1962, is named in honor of Buffalo native Leroy Raymond Coles, Jr., (1931-2015). An active and dedicated community servant, Mr. Coles served as president and chief executive officer of the Buffalo Urban League for 26 years beginning in 1972 where he helped local governments enact affirmative action policies, created job training programs and established the first black adoption agency in upstate New York. Mr. Coles joined the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Peoples March on Washington in 1963.

The program will open with a blessing from the Reverend George F. Nicholas, pastor, Lincoln Memorial United Methodist Church. Local dignitaries including New York State Assemblymember Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes, Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown and Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz are expected to speak about Mr. Coles' lifelong dedication to breaking down racial barriers. Brenda W. McDuffie, current president and CEO of the Buffalo Urban League, will address his great legacy. Other planned speakers are James R. Heck III, representing Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Rho Lambda Chapter, and Neil Leroy Coles, son of Mr. Coles and his wife of 55 years, Constance Coles.

A permanent building dedication plaque will be unveiled by Mayor Brown. Books and other personal memorabilia including Mr. Coles' awards, proclamations, letters and photographs will be on display in the Library for public viewing. Additionally, the new wall mural designed by local artist Julia Bottoms and featuring the images of library patrons was hand painted on walls in the lower level meeting space.

Today's ceremony highlights the completion of a year-long, \$1.48 million major renovation project that has improved access to the single story brick building. There is a new ADA-compliant side entrance and ramp, an elevator, lower level public meeting space, patron service counter, furniture and accessible public restrooms. Funding for the renovation was secured through New York State Assemblymember Peoples-Stokes, City of Buffalo Capital Funds, New York State Public Library Construction Grants and Buffalo & Erie County Public Library funds.

For more information about the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System, call 716-858-8900 or visit online at [www.BuffaloLib.org](http://www.BuffaloLib.org).

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