



**Coalition of Neighborhood
Organizations
P.O. Box 3294
Decatur, Illinois 62524**



NEWS RELEASE

TO: AREA MEDIA
FROM: NATIONAL NIGHT OUT COMMITTEE
DATE: August 1, 2023
RE: National Night Out Event

On Tuesday, August 1ST 2023, the City of Decatur, the Coalition of Neighborhood Organizations (CONO), along with its National Night Out (NNO) partners are inviting all residents to join us for the 40th Annual National Night Out event at HESS PARK, 2170 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. from 5-8 pm.

NNO is an annual community-building campaign that promotes strong police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live and work. Together, we are making that happen.

This year the National Night Out Committee will celebrate two community heroes.

Francie Johnson was a member of Fansfield Neighborhood Association where she served in every capacity. She was on the Executive Committee of the Coalition of Neighborhood Organizations (CONO). She was a member of the City of Decatur's Human Relations Commission. As a Neighborhood Advocate, she was someone you called for assistance and input. She cochaired the National Night Out event for many years. She was not afraid to speak up about concerns, regardless of whether it was the Mayor, City Council, or other officials. She was a one-of-a-kind volunteer.

Helen Jeanne Mears was a volunteer that worked hard to make her city a better place to live, work and play. Once Jeanne retired, she started "working". A strong advocate for her organized neighborhood Park City, she was determined to make it a place of CHOICE. She helped with the monthly newsletter and organized fundraisers each year. She also picked up donations from local food pantries to help needy families in her area, often donating numerous items herself. Jeanne represented her neighborhood on the Decatur Area Project Board and the National Night Out Steering Committee along with supporting other neighborhoods with events and activities whenever they needed help. She also served on the Executive Committee of the Coalition of Neighborhood Organizations. In her "spare time" she volunteered for RSVP Retire and Senior Volunteer Program, the local Christmas Basket drive.

In 2022, both Jeanne and Francie passed away. However, because of their commitment to neighborhoods and City of Decatur residents, the National Night Out Committee would like to recognize them by renaming our Neighborhood Ambassador award to the Johnson-Mears Community Service Award. Their families will receive the awards on their behalf.

For more information contact: Richelle Dunbar, City of Decatur
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