

Alachua County Florida

A Proclamation

Declaring June 1, 2024 as “Gate of The Muses for Ray Charles at Dreamers Garden Day” in Alachua County, Florida

- Whereas,* Urban Legend says that Ray Charles stayed in Gainesville, Florida, on his way to the School for the Deaf and the Blind in St. Augustine. He later visited Gainesville on The Chitlin Circuit, a touring route black entertainers used in the early 20th century; and
- Whereas,* Dreamers Garden honors Ray Charles's connection to our community with The Gate of The Muses, a reminder that a sensory garden for the Alachua County Council of The Blind was created in Dreamers Garden in 2003 for the visually impaired community of Alachua County; and
- Whereas,* Yaw Owusu Shangofemi, inspired by Ray Charles's music, created The Gate of The Muses to honor RC's musical legacy and as a tribute to his friend, colleague, and fellow dreamer Dr. Ade Ofunniyan, who was an integral part of the artistic evolution of Dreamers Garden since the spring of 2004 when Ade accompanied Jody Berman to meet the founder of Dreamers Garden, Maria Huff Edwards. As a result of that encounter, The Gate of Philip honoring Ade's grandfather's national living treasure, legendary Gullah Blacksmith Philip Simmons, was dedicated on May 31, 2007; and
- Whereas,* The Gate of The Muses pays tribute to Charles S. Chestnut, III, for his unwavering loyalty to the Grove Street neighborhood and honors Bertchie S. Kastor, who moved with her family to the neighborhood in 1939 during The Great Depression, loved Dreamers Garden and suggested naming “The Grove Street Neighborhood” in the late 1990’s; and
- Whereas,* The Gate pays respect to Elesta Pritchett, a childhood friend of Ray Charles and former City Council Member and Mayor of Greenville, Florida, who advocated for the creation and installation of Ray Charles's Bronze Statute in Greenville in 2006 and the reconstruction of Ray Charles's childhood home in 2008. The Gate of The Muses for Ray Charles Also honors his children, for they, too, are Ray Charles's legacy — Evelyn Robinson, Ray Charles, Jr., David Robinson, Charles Wayne Hendricks, Robert Robinson, Raenee Robinson, Sheila Raye Charles, Reatha Butler, Alexandra Bertrand, Vincent Kotchouninan, Robyn Moffet, and Ryan Corey Robinson.

Now, therefore, through the authority vested in me by the Board of County Commissioners of Alachua County, Florida, I do hereby proclaim June 1, 2024 as “Gate of The Muses for Ray Charles at Dreamers Garden Day” in Alachua County, Florida.

Duly proclaimed this 28th day of May, A.D., 2024.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF ALACHUA COUNTY FLORIDA

By: _____
Mary C. Alford, Chair

ATTEST:

J.K. “Jess” Irby, Esq.