

Evelyn Kelly Memorial

Evelyn Kelly died June 5, 2020, at age 91. Evelyn was born in Texarkana, Texan. Like so many other African Americans born in the era of Jim Crow, Evelyn sought a better life. After graduating from High School, Evelyn moved to New York City to attend business school and used her skills to get a bookkeeping job with a goal to start her own business. This goal was interrupted when she met Frank Kelly, an Air Force Officer, and they married in 1952. They started a family and Evelyn accompanied Frank on tours of duty in Europe. This began Evelyn's life-long appreciation for traveling in Europe. When they returned to the United States, Evelyn embarked on a life of community service, beginning with the Girl Scouts of America. In 1962 Frank was transferred to McChord Air Force Base. Evelyn juggled raising four children with a passion and deep involvement in local community and political action. She became associated with the Republican Party and called herself a Rockefeller/Dan Evans Republican, but in League activities Evelyn was never partisan and served in Voter Service for many years. Evelyn served in leadership positions with the Lakewood Presbyterian Church, the Girl Scouts, Tacoma YWCA, League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County, Church Women United, Lakewood United of Lakewood, and other organizations. Evelyn's style was "Let's get this done." She was not one to allow excuses or obstacles, and this attitude allowed her to persevere and thrive despite the sometimes-painful racial realities in which she lived.

Evelyn was a great leader in the League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County. She served on the Board for several years, working to make the League more visible and working on Voter Service. In 1999 Evelyn served as co-president with Virginia Taylor for two years. One of their main goals was to increase revenue to match the expenses and to reduce expenses. The office was reduced from three rooms to one room, a couple fundraisers brought in some revenue, some office furniture was sold to antique dealers. Another goal was to increase the visibility of the League in the community. Evelyn had a lot of energy to make the League more visible, and she represented the League in making presentations to organizations including the Girl Scouts and the Lakewood Rotary. In 2001 Evelyn served as co-president with Mary Kohli for two years. They focused on increasing the visibility of the League, increasing membership, and building a more stable financial base. One major effort was working closely with the Tacoma Housing Authority in the Salishan housing development on the election process for a totally new Resident Council. This project involved several League volunteers spending over 2900 hours in various ways to reach the nearly 800 multi-cultural residents of the housing development.