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Governor Kaine to honor former slave, still helping children 137 years later

Richmond, VA—Governor Timothy M. Kaine will honor a former Richmond slave, Lucy Goode Brooks, on Saturday, March 15 by dedicating a Virginia historical marker on the grounds where she and her Ladies Sewing Circle for Charitable Works opened the *Friends Asylum for Colored Orphans* in 1871.

The ceremony will be held at 11 a.m., in historic North Jackson Ward, at the corner of Charity and Saint Paul Streets where the orphanage once stood. Governor Kaine will be joined by Joseph K. Brooks, an archivist at the Library of Congress and the great, great-grandson of Lucy Goode Brooks.

In 1989, Mr. Brooks and his parents, Walter H. Brooks, Ill and Charlotte Kendricks Brooks, researched and compiled *A Brooks Chronicle: The Lives and Times of An African-American Family*—bringing to life, in great detail, the hardships of a Richmond family enduring slavery.

FROM A MOTHER'S ANGUISH

According to the Chronicle, Lucy Goode Brooks, 1818-1900, lost the first two of her 13 children. The first child, born from rape by her master's son, was sent away. Then, Lucy and her husband, Albert Royal Brooks, lost their firstborn daughter Margaret Ann at age 18. Margaret Ann was sold away when her owner discovered she possessed the dangerous skill to read and write–skills her mother taught her. "Undoubtedly Lucy remembered her lost children, when after the Civil War, she made her remarkable effort to help the children of Richmond," states the Chronicle.

During the time Lucy was rallying her friends to provide a haven for abandoned children, she would have been a grandmotherly figure in the neighborhood, where Bill "Bojangles" Robinson was dancing in the streets for pennies. And, young Maggie L. Walker perhaps sat in a pew near Mrs. Brooks during Sunday services at the First African Baptist Church, where both were members.

FRIENDS YESTERDAY

The post-Civil War orphanage operated from 1871-1920. From 1925-1935, **FRIENDS** was a foster care agency. From 1938-1972, **FRIENDS** was the only adoption agency placing African American youth in Virginia. Under the leadership of John C. Purnell, Jr., from the 70s to present, **FRIENDS** evolved to become a multi-service agency supporting the entire family, as it responded to the changing needs of the community.

FRIENDS TODAY

Located behind the marker is the playground for the **Friends Family Center**, opened in 1973. **FRIENDS Association for Children** operates two other centers: the **Mary Tyler McClenahan Childcare Center** opened in Winchester Greens in 2000 and the Robert L. **Taylor Childcare Center** opened in historic Church Hill in 2003.

Today, **FRIENDS** continues the legacy of Lucy Goode Brooks by serving Richmond's most economically and opportunity-challenged neighborhoods.

Serving 3,500 persons annually, **FRIENDS** provides subsidized infant-toddler-preschool developmental day care, after school tutoring and youth enrichment, family support service and adult leadership and career advancement programs. **FRIENDS** also began a comprehensive Music & Performing Arts program in 2007.

The **FRIENDS Bell Choir** will perform at the marker ceremony. The event will be held rain or shine with a cake and punch reception following in the **Friends Family Center**.

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