

HOUSE RESOLUTION 241

By Clemmons

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Catherine Coke of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the untimely passing of Catherine Coke, an educator who excelled at shaping young minds through the performance arts; and

WHEREAS, a member of the faculty since 2005, Catherine Coke served as the High School Theatre Director at the University School of Nashville (USN), where she had worked tirelessly to develop, expand, and nurture the theatre program to provide student actors a chance to present exemplary work on the stage; and

WHEREAS, seeking to challenge her students to publicly engage with the world and their community through the performing arts, Ms. Coke fearlessly sought out works that dealt with difficult topics and issues for productions; and

WHEREAS, a beloved mentor and colleague, Catherine Coke possessed a vibrant personality, and she had a gift for making every University School of Nashville student and teacher feel known and valued; and

WHEREAS, a director for more than thirty years with a special emphasis on new works, Catherine Coke received her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre at Brown University and enjoyed tenures in Washington, D.C., New York City, and Los Angeles before returning to Nashville in 2000, when she started Nashville Theatre Works, an organization dedicated to playwrights and playwriting that mounted twenty-five staged readings and three productions; and

WHEREAS, directing all High School theatre productions at USN, Ms. Coke also served as faculty advisor to the Student Theatre Guild and fostered a community partnership between the school and SENSE Theatre Company, as she and her students used theatrical practices to facilitate socialization skills in children with autism and produced original shows; and

WHEREAS, under her direction, the theatre students of the University School of Nashville put on productions that not only entertained their audiences but also made them feel and think, resulting in the best theatre possible; and

WHEREAS, two important highlights among the school's expansive theatre productions were *Flames*, a one-act play written by alumnus Preston Crowder, that initiated a local discussion on social justice, race relations, police brutality, gentrification, and the legislation of marijuana, and *Bloody, Bloody Andrew Jackson*, a controversial musical that pushed her students to challenge both themselves and the audience; and

WHEREAS, in addition to her responsibilities as High School Theatre Director, Catherine Coke taught Playwrights and Playwriting, Improvisation, Acting: Character Development, and Speech, Movement, and Character Acting and mentored students through their independent studies; and

WHEREAS, her many professional accomplishments aside, Catherine Coke was the devoted mother of her beloved son, Cyrus Shick; and

WHEREAS, Catherine Coke leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should remember the bountiful life of this exceptional educator and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor the memory of Catherine Coke, reflecting fondly upon her inspirational leadership as High School Theatre Director at the University School of Nashville and her enduring legacy as an educator.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the students, colleagues, family, and many friends of Ms. Coke.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.