Nomination to Rename the Fairview Public Library Community Room to the Annie Clarke Ager Community Room

To: Buncombe County Board of Commissioners
From: Friends of Fairview Library
April 16, 2025

Friends of Fairview Library respectfully proposes renaming the Fairview Public Library community room as the "Annie Clarke Ager Community Room." Annie Ager's lifelong dedication to Fairview and Buncombe County has profoundly shaped our community and fostered inclusivity, resilience, health and well-being, and a love of lifelong learning. Her commitment to the philosophy and mission of public libraries has created a strong and dynamic library community, one especially dedicated to promoting literacy and a love of reading in children and young adults. Through her advocacy with Friends of Fairview Library, Annie has helped make Fairview Branch Library a hub of community services and learning, one which serves all members of the community.

Meeting the Criteria for Naming Recognition

Contribution to the Health and Well-Being of Buncombe County

Throughout her life, Annie has worked tirelessly to build a connected, supportive community. Whether she is welcoming newcomers to the community or supporting an "old" Fairview family, her kindness and warmth are unflagging and unreserved. Her integrity and generosity infuse all of her efforts from helping neighbors to ensuring equitable opportunities for all residents of Buncombe County.

Through her decades of work with young people at the Hickory Nut Gap Farm Camp, she has instilled confidence, resilience, and a love of nature in generations of children. She is also committed to the elimination of financial barriers for campers, making sure that any child who wants to participate in camp is able to do so.

Annie and her family have been early and ongoing participants in Root Cause Farm and similar projects, encouraging farmers to donate fresh produce to help address food insecurity in the area. Her commitment extended to personally delivering eggs to lower-income families, including Fairview's often overlooked Black communities. More than just food assistance, these deliveries fostered dignity, trust, and wellness checks. "We grew up—civil rights were a part of our life," Annie recalled. (Excerpted from the recorded oral history on file with Buncombe County Special Collections) Her quiet yet powerful acts of service continue to inspire Fairview residents.

Beyond her personal outreach, Annie has worked to preserve Fairview's agricultural heritage. She has been a steadfast advocate for local farmers and sustainable practices, ensuring Fairview remains a place where agricultural traditions thrive alongside modern growth.

Active Involvement in Buncombe County Affairs

For decades, Annie has been a trusted advocate in Fairview and Buncombe County, engaging in charitable efforts, church activities, advocacy, and elections. Her home has long been a gathering place where all are welcome, and she continues to support young people and our seniors, fostering an inter-generational sense of belonging and growth. Annie has also been a dedicated advocate for civic engagement, actively promoting Buncombe County Election Services and voter information to ensure that every community member has access to accurate and essential voting resources.

Exceptional Contribution to the Library's Establishment

The Fairview Public Library would not exist without Annie Ager's advocacy. Fairview had active bookmobile stops, but by the early 1990s, projected growth warranted a library branch. According to former library director Ed Sheary, Annie played a key role in making it happen:

"At this point, some thirty years later, I can't recall the first conversation I had with Annie, but whether by her direct contact or someone advising me to talk with her, our discussions began. Annie had two key skills: she was a fantastic organizer—Fairview had a Friends group before it had a library—and she was politically well-connected. Calls she made to Commissioners were returned, whether they were Republicans or Democrats. Typically, the hardest part of any new branch project is obtaining a site that most people can agree upon, and Annie basically took care of that. She united the community on not only the need for a library but where the library should be located." (via email communication)

Thanks to her efforts, Fairview secured our library. She went on to serve on the system-wide Friends board, two terms on the Library Board of Trustees, and is the current President of the Friends of Fairview Library.

Lasting Impact on Buncombe County's Goals

Annie has spent her life promoting reading and literacy, advocating for libraries, supporting young readers, and strengthening the Buncombe County Public Library system. Thanks to her advocacy, Fairview's library is a space where children, seniors, and families can access information, attend enriching programs, and build social connections. "The library has been a great thing," Annie has said. "Even if not everybody is a member of the Friends of the Library, it's good to have a place you can go and meet people. And learn from books. You can always learn from books." (Buncombe County Special Collections recorded oral history)

Annie is a guardian of Fairview's natural environment and farmland, recognizing the critical role that sustainable agriculture and green spaces play in community well-being. Growing up and working on a family farm, Annie has long understood the challenges associated with mountain agriculture. Her family's history with the Farmers Federation, an innovative cooperative organization which greatly benefitted WNC's farmers, contributed to Annie's commitment to farmers and farming. Maintaining that commitment, Annie's family farm, Hickory Nut Gap, is now part of the Buncombe County Farmland Preservation Program, ensuring the land will remain in agricultural production and contributing to the perpetuation of Appalachian farming traditions.

Education has always been important to Annie and she has dedicated countless hours to supporting Fairview's schools through education activism and volunteer work both in the classroom and through the PTA. Even now, years after her children left school, Annie continues her education advocacy through programs which provide books to Fairview students who are constrained from owning personal books.

Adjacent to Fairview Elementary School, the Fairview Community Center is an integral part of the Fairview community. The aging building provides much needed space for social events, community fundraisers and bazaars, and auxiliary space for local youth league sports practices and games. It also houses Food for Fairview, a non-profit food pantry serving the Fairview community. It was through Annie's efforts as manager–and some say savior–of the community center that it continues to be a vital part of Fairview.

Conclusion

Annie Ager's contributions are woven into the fabric of Fairview. Her boundless energy, compassion, and leadership have strengthened the community in immeasurable ways. Naming the library's community room in her honor is a fitting tribute to a woman who has dedicated her life to uplifting Fairview.

We respectfully request your consideration of this nomination to honor Annie Clarke Ager's remarkable legacy and to inspire future generations to a life of service.