



TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON

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EAST HAMPTON TOWN MARKS JUNETEENTH WITH EVENT HONORING THE LATE LT. LEE A. HAYES, AN EH RESIDENT AND WORLD WAR II TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

The Lt. Lee A. Hayes Youth Park in Amagansett was the site on Saturday for East Hampton Town's commemoration of Juneteenth, as well as an event marking the 100th anniversary of the late Lee A. Hayes, a Tuskegee Airman for whom the park was recently named.

Mr. Hayes was an East Hampton resident who, as a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, the first Black military aviators in the U.S. Army Air Corps, helped to break the color barrier in the previously segregated U.S. military.

One of 13 siblings whose extended family put down roots in the vicinity of the park, an area that came to be known as "Hayesville," Lt. Hayes encountered the color barrier once again following his military service when he sought work, unsuccessfully, as a commercial airline pilot. He worked as a custodian at the Brookhaven National Lab, as a carpenter, and as the first Black U.S. Postal Service employee in East Hampton. He served his community as a charter member of the Calvary Baptist Church, and as a Democratic committeeman who advocated for the hiring of the first African-American poll watcher.

He walked often to the American Legion in Amagansett, passing the park now bearing his name, before passing away in 2013,

The event on Saturday featured the unveiling of a plaque in honor of Mr. Hayes, and a kiosk featuring historical information. Members of the Hayes family who gathered for the event participated in a "Walk in the Path of an American Hero" from the Legion Hall to the park. Led by a Color Guard, the walk included members of the Tuskegee Airmen Motorcycle Club.

A program at the park included family remembrances, song, and remarks by East Hampton Town Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc and Congresswoman Stacy Plaskett (D- USVI), a Hayes family friend.

"Just as Juneteenth, a new federal holiday, focuses important attention on the history of African-Americans in our country and celebrates the end of slavery, I am pleased that our youth park in East

Hampton will now offer an opportunity to learn about the contributions of members of our African-American community, such as Lt. Hayes and the Hayes family,” said East Hampton Town Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc.

The full program is attached, as are photos from the event. Photo credit: Richard Lewin