

In Memoriam



Jane Castor, Mayor

WHEREAS, the City of Tampa takes pride in recognizing those individuals whose commitment and dedication have made a lasting impact on our community; one of these individuals was **The Honorable Gwendolyn (Gwen) Henderson**, a respected and beloved Tampa City Councilwoman, Educator, Business Owner, Community Leader and Advocate who passed away on Tuesday, June 10, 2025, at the age of 60; and

WHEREAS, a Tampa, Florida native, Ms. Henderson was born on October 5, 1964, to the late Asbury and Gladys Henderson, she grew up in the Carver City neighborhood attending Hillsborough County Public Schools, graduating from Jefferson High School, and she received a Bachelor of Science degree from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), and a Master of Education and Education Specialist degrees from St. Leo University, and the dedication she applied to her studies led to a lifetime of making a difference in the education realm and within her community; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Henderson returned to her beloved Jefferson High School as an educator where she taught, mentored, and impacted future generations for many years, and the love she had for her students and the joy she felt in her role as a teacher was very evident, and her passion for African American history, culture and literacy was well known, and it led to her founding the **Black English Bookstore** in 2022, fulfilling her mission of promoting reading and fostering curiosity, and she established the HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) Legacy Project LLC to highlight HBCU alumni authors, and the bookstore's motto is "Free to Read" with many books gifted to young readers to encourage them; and

WHEREAS, known for her unwavering commitment to the Tampa Bay community and desire to make a difference, Ms. Henderson was elected to Tampa City Council in May 2023 representing District 5, and she was highly respected for her strength of character and as a fierce, powerful and fair advocate, and she served as Chairwoman Pro Tem of Tampa City Council, Chair of the Tampa Community Redevelopment Agency, and received a mayoral appointment as the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART) Board Designee, and she made an enormous impact and became so beloved within the community she served; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Henderson was fully committed to her students, constituents, and city, and she was a long-standing member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, former Coordinator and Elective Teacher with AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), was a life member of the FAMU National Alumni, St. Leo University Alumni and American Booksellers Associations, and a strong supporter of the HBCU Foundation where she very recently hosted the HBCU Bound Celebration Tampa event on June 3, 2025, and her legacy is honored by the Tampa Club at FAMU's *Gwendolyn Henderson Scholarship*; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Henderson was known for her tireless efforts to make her community a better place, for touching the lives of others, for her passion for education, equity, and economic opportunity, and for her keen sense of humor, and she will forever be remembered for her unwavering love of her family, intellect, her kind, caring, and joyful nature, as an extraordinary mentor and a champion for her community, and as someone who was admired as a compassionate and unselfish humanitarian who made a difference and served as a positive role model for others to emulate.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jane Castor, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the city of Tampa, Florida, do hereby urge all citizens to join me in publicly expressing sorrow and heartfelt appreciation to the Gwendolyn Henderson Family, her loving daughter Ariel, devoted sisters Elizabeth, Sonya and Velda, brother Gregory, and other family members, and to express our hopes that they will take solace in their cherished memories and the vast impact of her life on our community and all those who knew her, especially the young people she taught, mentored, and loved.

Dated in Tampa, Florida, this 16th day of June 2025.

Jane Castor
Mayor