

**RESOLUTION NO. 13-505**

**WHEREAS**, the City Council and Mayor of the City of Huntsville, Alabama, are apprised of the passing of Mr. Richard M. Jess on January 13, 2013. Mr. Jess was an outstanding community servant in assisting low income families achieve a better life and become better citizens of our community; and,

**WHEREAS**, he was born September 27, 1924, in Hoboken, New Jersey. When he turned 18, the danger of the streets and the desire to fight for his country led him to the Army Air Corps where he was trained as an Instrumentation Specialist and Mechanic. He was stationed in Italy during WWII and became a decorated soldier. When he returned from the war, he went to work for Adam Hat Company in New York, Memphis, Tennessee and Jackson, Mississippi; and,

**WHEREAS**, Richard married Celia Bilsky on June 20, 1948, in Memphis, Tennessee. They had four children: Steven W. Jess, Larry E. Jess, Reva L. Maynard and Pamela S. Jaillet. In Memphis, Richard worked for a small clothing store called Black and White that was known for giving clothing out to local families in need. His store was located on the site that is now the gift shop for Graceland. One of the families that received clothing was the Presley's, and Richard knew and became friends with Elvis when he was beginning his career. They often shared lunch, and many times he 'hid' Elvis from screaming fans in the back room of his store; and,

**WHEREAS**, in 1959, the family moved to Huntsville when Richard was offered a management position for Shainberg's in Parkway City Shopping Center. He was the Manager of Shainberg's until 1966. From 1966 through 1976, he was a co-owner of Gilberg's Fabrics in The Mall, later bought the store and changed the name to Jess Fabrics. He also became President of the Mall Merchants Association. From 1976 to 1986, he was the Vice President of Production and Inventory Control for Benham Corporation in Scottsboro, Alabama; and,

**WHEREAS**, he retired in 1986, became a VISTA Volunteer and was assigned to Living in Family Transition (LIFT) Housing. From 1986 to 1990, he was dedicated to locating quality, affordable homes for low income families, and assisting individuals in their transition into the mainstream community. In 1990, he became the Executive Director of LIFT Housing, where he directed all activities to help Huntsville's low income families. He was selected as a member of Mayor Hettinger's Commission on the Homeless and represented the Commission during the 1990 HUD Conference. Because of his years of service to Huntsville's poorest citizens, Richard was recognized by Mayor Hettinger for Outstanding Community Service, received a Letter of Commendation and November 15, 1990 was proclaimed "Richard Jess Day" in the City of Huntsville. He also participated as a panel member during Alabama A&M's discussions on the problems of the homeless, and served on Mayor

Hettinger's Vision 2000 program as a panel member representing LIFT Housing. He retired from LIFT Housing in 2007; and,

**WHEREAS**, Richard was principal for a local religious school and congregational president. He was a Duplicate Bridge Life Master and President of the local American Contract Bridge League. He passed this life at the age of 88 on January 13, 2013.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the City Council and Mayor of the City of Huntsville, Alabama, that we wish to commemorate the life of Richard M. Jess, and express our sincerest appreciation for his dedication in assisting lower income families to enhance their lives and become more effective citizens in our community.

**ADOPTED** this the 11th day of July, 2013.

---

President of the City Council of  
the City of Huntsville, Alabama

**APPROVED** this the 11th day of July, 2013.

---

Mayor of the City of Huntsville,  
Alabama