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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Austin Green Team Memorializes Four Community Heroes!**

(Chicago, Illinois) – On Saturday, May 18, 2024, the Austin Green Team will hold its annual memorial service for four (4) Austin community heroes. The ceremony will take place from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., in the Memorial Garden on the corner of Laramie Ave. and Washington Blvd. The entire community of Austin and nearby neighborhoods are welcome to witness this special occasion. A brick, with their names inscribed on it, will be placed in the Memorial Garden for the following Austin community heroes, who are now deceased:

**WILLIE FERBA** – As a pillar of his community WILLIE dedicated his life and resources to CAPS- Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy where he earned a variety of badges of honor to his dedication. Willie and his wife Irma set out on a mission and vision to beautify and establish a safe neighborhood where they would enjoy their hobby and love for plants and gardening in the community. Willie and his wife founded, “Vision On Menard,” a community garden, and they were both members of the Austin Green Team and served in various capacities. Willie was determined to take back the neighborhood and build a safe community by fortifying values and redirecting youth who were misguided. He did this by participating in the youth programs within the community and leading as Block Club President, where he would yearly host block club parties where people would come from near and far. Willie joined Gorham Methodist Church in 1978 where he remained as a dedicated and faithful member and served as a Deacon on the board. Willie also served as chaplain for the VFW Hall. Willie was loved and adored by many. If you encountered him and his infectious smile and charismatic personality you couldn’t help but agree. Willie would always surround himself around his friends, family, and confidants and especially his beautiful bride, Irma.

**DONNA KANAPES** – DONNA was very active in her community and church. She was beloved by her neighbors, gardening organizations, and church friends. At St. Catherine of Siena-St Lucy Church, Donna sang in the Praise and Celebration Choirs and was a Cantor for masses. She also sang with the St Catherine-St. Lucy-St. Giles Choir, and in the Bethesda Rehab and Senior Care Center Choir. She was also an active member of her church’s Fundraising Committee and Co-Chaired the Christmas Bazaar and other fundraising events. Donna loved cats and took special care of her own and many neighborhood cats. The organizations where Donna served included the Austin Green Team, Midway Park Community, Austin Shock Neighborhood Association, Northwest Austin Council, the South Austin Coalition Community Council, and the American Library Association.

**JON VEAL** – JON lived his life to the full. He was a man of God, a servant of the people, an artist, a believer in the power of community and using his voice to change the world. To know Jon was to experience joy, love, and hope for humanity. He was a student of life, a teacher who excelled at creating space for others to learn and grow to their full potential. His



legacy of serving his beloved Chicago will live on through the people that he has encountered. In 2019, Jon and Jordan founded alt\_ Chicago, an artist led, (501c3) that undertakes tangible acts of service using art and faith as tools that galvanize impassioned, self-sufficient communities to join in, at a time when past and present injustices spur us to collectively imagine our best future. Jon coined the phrase “every part plays a part that only that part can play.” He believed in the power of community voice. He used his art to create spaces that gave room for the service of humanity. He chose to live out the founding scripture for alt\_ which is: You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven. Matthew 5:14-16. It was not a coincidence that Jon chose to establish his new ministry in the Austin community. Jon’s vision for Austin and his love for the city of Chicago was sparked by his Grandmother, Mercedes Douglas, a community organizer, and faithful volunteer, serving others and the church...and who also has a brick right here in the Memorial Garden. Though Jon is deeply missed, it is with great joy that he finished his race well, encouraging everyone whom he loved to do the same.

**ROY WILLIAMS** – ROY loved people and people loved Roy. He loved life, good food, good friends, and he really loved his family. Every day he would tell everyone, “I love you and there’s nothing you can do about it.” He never met a stranger. The various jobs that Roy held, he met and kept true friends, who helped him start new clubs and groups. He started Roy’s Garage Bid Whist League; which also traveled together yearly; and he started Roy’s Garage Super Bowl parties. A former professional baseball player, Roy formed a community baseball team called, “The St. Louis Cardinals.” This team was form from young boys who worked for his newspaper agency, those who looked up to him as their role model. The love of baseball never left him. After the little leaguers grew up, Roy joined the Illinois Athletics Officials Association (IAOA). He later became an official umpire for High School and College baseball and basketball, umpiring game all over the city and suburbs. After retiring from his newspaper business, Roy went on to teach Physical Education at Lady of Sorrows School as well as coach the basketball team. As a retiree, Roy kept busy, working in the community, belonging to various groups, such as: Noble Neighbors, Austin Coming Together, CAPS of the 24<sup>th</sup> District Police Department, President of the Community Warriors, President of Menard Ave. Block Club, Founder of Menard Ave. Young Entrepreneurs, and instrumental in the starting of “Porch Prayer” on Menard Ave. with Pastor McIntyre.

The Austin Green Team is a volunteer organization that builds, maintains, and supports community gardens and community beautification in the Austin neighborhood. For more than thirty years, the Austin Green Team has also managed two greenhouses located in the Austin Career & Educational Academy High School, propagating and growing plants that help maintain the community gardens that the Austin Green Team oversees. The purpose of the Austin Green Team is to enhance the quality of life issues by working collaboratively with other community stakeholders in beautifying the Austin Community. The Austin Green Team meets every third Thursday evening, at the City of Chicago 15<sup>th</sup> District Police Department community room. If you would like to volunteer with the Austin Green Team, please contact Tina Augustus, President, at (773) 931-2145 or via email at [tinaaugustus@elevateservices.net](mailto:tinaaugustus@elevateservices.net). You can visit us at [www.austingreenteam.org](http://www.austingreenteam.org) or on Facebook at [austingreenteam](https://www.facebook.com/austingreenteam). # # # #