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For more information, please contact:
Dawn Caldwell, Village Manager
(815) 886-0279 | dcaldwell@romeoville.org

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The Gifts of Georgia Wilson

You may recognize the name Georgia Wilson from RomeoFest, when Georgia Wilson Day grants individuals with special needs free carnival rides. You may also recognize it as the name of the building the Northern Will County Special Recreation Association (NWCSRA) is housed in. Who was Georgia Wilson and why do we continue to celebrate her name?

Wilson was a Romeoville resident who started out as a volunteer for the Romeoville Recreation Board in 1966. She became a part-time employee a year later and in 1973 was promoted to Recreational Director. She sat on the Title 1 Drop Out Prevention Advisory Board for School District 365U, trying to get drop outs back into school and finding out why they dropped out in the first place. She helped to found the Romeo-Brook Community Core Committee and established a hot-line phone service that people could call in times of trouble. She formed the Adult Athletic Booster Club and High School Band Booster Club at Romeoville High School. She also sat on the 365U School Board. As you can see, Wilson was a very active member of the community.



The work she is most remembered for, however, is with children with special needs. Wilson felt that recreation was important for all children, especially those with special needs. She would fill up the trunk of her car with different sports equipment and supplies and use them to lead programs for these children at Romeoville parks. As the program continued, the number of special needs children that participated continued to increase. Kids from Bolingbrook, Lockport, and Plainfield were coming to the programs because their park districts did not offer anything like it. Eventually, a co-operative between Romeoville and these communities was formed with Georgia Wilson as the director. This was the start of what today is known as the Special Recreation Association. As the director, Wilson worked to secure grant money and other funding for special recreation programs and advocated for the rights of those with special needs.

Georgia Wilson died in 2005 at the age of 71. In September of 2010, the Special Recreation Association she helped to create moved into the building at 10 Montrose, the former home of the Romeoville Police Department. Six months later, the building was renamed the Georgia Wilson Community Service Center (now simply the Georgia Wilson Center) in honor of the woman who, no matter the problem or reason, always had time for others.