Dorothy M. DeWitty

1926 - December 7, 2012

This Overton family member was a trail-blazing educator, author, and civic leader who later helped bridge community divides as a member of Tulsa's first City Council.

Born in Bristow in 1926, she moved to Tulsa at age 9. She graduated in 1944 from Booker T. Washington High School and got her bachelor's degree in home economics from Langston University. Later, she added a master's in education from the University of Tulsa.

Dorothy had a 30-year career with the Tulsa Public Schools, serving as a classroom educator and principal at Walt Whitman Elementary School. She was elected to the original Tulsa City Council in 1990 and was the first black female to serve on the new nine-member body. She received the City Council’s Lifetime Service Award in 2008.

She was the first black female elementary school principal in Tulsa, as well as the first black president of the League of Women Voters. Ms. DeWitty remained active in civic organizations until her death in 2012 at age 85.

Helping turn Whitman, one of the district's worst-performing schools, into one of its best by the time she retired in 1985 was one of her proudest achievements, she said later.

DeWitty received many awards and recognition including: Tulsa City Council Chamber Library named in her honor; inductee into the Oklahoma Women’s Hall of Fame; Trustee of the Authority Board of the University Center at Tulsa; and first African-American elected President of the former Tulsa Community Action Agency.

She authored “Tulsa a Tale of Two Cities,” depicting the history of Tulsa’s African American community.

She was a founding member of Tulsa’s first multicultural Unitarian Church and a founder of the Center for Racial Justice. She was a member of the Ellis Walker Wood Memorial Society, Delta Kappa Gamma Society and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority.