



Proclamation No. 21-0422
Recognizing the Life and Legacy of Dr. Cornelia Vertenstein

WHEREAS, the City Council of Denver wishes to recognize the late long-time Hilltop resident, Dr. Cornelia “Nellie” Vertenstein, for her life spent teaching children to make music; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Vertenstein began teaching piano to children when she was just 14 years old, going door to door to teach in her native war-torn Sibiu, Romania; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Vertenstein survived the Holocaust and became a respected concert pianist in Bucharest, Romania; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Vertenstein, her former husband, and her daughter fled Communist Romania first to Israel and then to the United States, settling in Denver; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Vertenstein launched a piano studio where she spent decades teaching Denver children how to play piano and develop persistence, teaching them not just how to learn but how to work, and earned a Doctorate in Music from the University of Colorado; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Vertenstein told her students that one does not practice, one makes music; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Vertenstein proved herself to be adaptable through life, utilizing new and different pedagogical techniques as a teacher, and learning new forms of technology in her 90s in order to move her classes to FaceTime as COVID lockdowns began, and then learning Zoom in order to hold Student Recitals; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Vertenstein spoke five languages, including Spanish, which she taught herself late in life to better communicate with more people in Denver; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Vertenstein taught the children of Denver piano until the morning of the day she entered the hospital, shortly before her death on February 12, 2021, saying, “If I die, don’t be sad. I led a productive life helping children;”

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER:

Section 1. That the Council of the City and County of Denver recognizes Dr. Cornelia Vertenstein for her service to the children of Denver and her legacy of vital work fostering a deep love of music in her students.

Section 2. That the Clerk of the City and County of Denver shall affix the seal of the City and County of Denver to this proclamation and that a copy be transmitted to Marianna Vertenstein, Dr. Vertenstein’s daughter.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL April 12, 2021

PRESIDENT