

Introduced by Council Member Johnson:

**RESOLUTION 2025-791**

A RESOLUTION HONORING AND COMMENDING MR. DEWITT COOPER, III, FOR HIS OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ARTS, EDUCATION, AND THE JACKSONVILLE COMMUNITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

**WHEREAS**, Mr. DeWitt Cooper, III, is an internationally acclaimed performer, teacher, mentor, and motivator whose passion for the arts has uplifted generations of young people in Jacksonville and beyond; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Cooper began his teaching career at Brentwood Elementary School, where he inspired young men to rise above insecurity and discover their place in the world, one of whom has gone on to become the face of the Memphis Ballet; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Cooper currently serves as a Professor of Theater and Dance at Morgan State University, while remaining deeply connected to Jacksonville through his role as Artist-in-Residence for LaVilla School of the Arts and Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, where he teaches Musical Theatre Styles and Physical Theatre; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Cooper is the Co-Founding Artistic Director of the CooperMorgan Dance Theatre, alongside noted dance empresario Savrey Morgan, a creative partnership that has brought innovation, collaboration, and global recognition to the Jacksonville arts community; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Cooper's leadership and dedication have consistently elevated arts education in Jacksonville, with many of his students advancing to prestigious arts colleges and thriving as professional artists across the world; and

1       **WHEREAS**, Mr. Cooper's has extended his impact far beyond the  
2 classroom, volunteering for six years with Beaches Fine Arts to bring  
3 free world-class performances to the public, and previously serving  
4 as Artistic Director of both the Jacksonville Center for the Arts and  
5 The Posh Factory; and

6       **WHEREAS**, Mr. Cooper's academic journey reflects both discipline  
7 and distinction, having attended Florida State University as a JMI  
8 Scholar, and later Case Western Reserve University, where he earned  
9 his Master of Fine Arts in Contemporary Dance with full scholarship  
10 and stipend, becoming the first African American male to graduate  
11 with this terminal degree; and

12       **WHEREAS**, Mr. Cooper's professional excellence has been  
13 consistently recognized, including the 2017 Pelican Award for Best  
14 Choreography for *In the Heights*, induction into the 2018 Leadership  
15 Accelerator Program sponsored by Chase Bank, recognition as 2021  
16 Adjunct Teacher of the Year, and being named 2023 Teacher of the Week  
17 by First Coast News; and

18       **WHEREAS**, in 2019, Mr. Cooper was appointed sponsor and Director  
19 of Black Arts at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, where he founded  
20 the groundbreaking red-carpet showcase *A.L.I.V.E.* and launched the  
21 Legacy Project to commission a bronze statue of Douglas Anderson,  
22 ensuring a permanent monument to Black history and artistic legacy  
23 in Jacksonville; and

24       **WHEREAS**, Mr. Cooper's influence as a performer, teacher, and  
25 choreographer has reached global audiences, gracing classrooms and  
26 stages in the United States, Europe, Canada, Japan, China, and Taiwan,  
27 while simultaneously mentoring young artists who now thrive  
28 professionally on stages around the world; now therefore

29       **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

30       **Section 1.**       The City Council hereby honors and commends Mr.  
31 DeWitt Cooper, III, for his extraordinary contributions to the arts,

1 education, and the enrichment of Jacksonville's cultural life.

2       **Section 2.       Effective Date.**   This Resolution shall become  
3 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective  
4 without the Mayor's signature.

5  
6 Form Approved:

7  
8 /s/ Shannon MacGuilllis

9 Office of General Counsel

10 Legislation Prepared By: Colleen Hampsey, City Council Research

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