Assembly Resolution No. 858

BY: M. of A. Buttenschon

COMMEMORATING the 30th Anniversary of the Johnson Park Center of Utica, New York, on November 14, 2025

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend those organizations of high purpose and enduring commitment which have faithfully served the needs of their communities and the people of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and fully in accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Johnson Park Center of Utica, New York, to be celebrated on Friday, November 14, 2025; and

WHEREAS, The Johnson Park Center was founded in 1994 by Reverend Dr. Maria A. Scates, President and CEO, whose vision was to transform and uplift an inner-city community through faith, compassion, and service; and

WHEREAS, After a meeting with Robert Polivka, the former President of the organization, and a local resident, Reverend Dr. Scates was introduced to the Cornhill area of Utica, New York, and on November 14, 1995, she signed the deed to 26-28 Johnson Park, marking the official beginning of her ministry and community outreach; and

WHEREAS, With humility and determination, Reverend Dr. Scates began the transformation of a neighborhood once blighted by crime, drugs, and neglect, into what is today known as the Johnson Park Center - a beacon of hope, stability, and community renewal; and

WHEREAS, From 1996 to 1998, Reverend Ursula Meier of Switzerland joined Johnson Park Center with her missionary team to serve children in need; deeply inspired by the Center's mission, she returned in 1998 after graduating from Pinecrest Bible Training Center and has since remained a vital force in its continued success; and

WHEREAS, Over the past three decades, under the steadfast leadership, vision, and spiritual guidance of Reverend Dr. Maria A. Scates and Reverend Ursula Meier, the Johnson Park Center has grown into a multifaceted organization addressing critical community needs; and

WHEREAS, Today, Johnson Park Center operates a women's shelter providing 18 beds to women experiencing homelessness; nine apartment buildings with 35 supportive living apartments for women and children, including one building dedicated to family reintegration; and a robust weekly food pantry serving between 500 and 700 households; and

WHEREAS, The Center's Youth Program offers vital early education support to underprivileged children, preparing them for Kindergarten and promoting lifelong learning; and

WHEREAS, Expanding its mission, Johnson Park Center recently established Johnson Park Green Living, LLC, a visionary housing and community development initiative encompassing four buildings, including

a 51-unit residential building (31 of which serve frail or elderly individuals and those with serious mental health needs), a 2-unit and 9-unit building for low-income families, and a vibrant Community Center; and

WHEREAS, The Johnson Park Green Living Community Center features educational spaces, offices, a commercial kitchen, and a community room that hosts GED and parenting classes, as well as semi-weekly breakfasts that foster community, inclusion, and life skills; and

WHEREAS, As it looks to the future, the Johnson Park Center remains steadfast in its mission to serve the community with love, acceptance, and compassion, to provide shelter and supportive housing, and to expand educational and outreach programs through continued collaboration with community partners and nonprofit organizations; and

WHEREAS, The Johnson Park Center stands as a testament to the transformative power of faith, service, and community engagement, embodying the highest ideals of civic responsibility and humanitarian concern; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is proud to recognize the profound impact of the Johnson Park Center upon the lives of countless individuals and families, and to honor its enduring legacy of hope and service in the City of Utica and the State of New York; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Johnson Park Center of Utica, New York, recognizing three decades of transformative leadership, compassion, and community empowerment; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Reverend Dr. Maria A. Scates, Founder, President and CEO of the Johnson Park Center.