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Memory of civil rights legend Oliver Hill will live on in Roanoke



The Virginia Civil Rights Memorial unveiled Monday in Richmond features a tribute to Oliver Hill. In Roanoke, an effort to honor the civil rights legend is also moving forward.

It's been years in the making, but the renovation of Oliver Hill's childhood home is now just a few weeks from completion. It's an effort to honor his memory with a legal assistance center not far behind.

The house will re-open as a community law center where senior citizens can go for legal assistance.

Hill was born in Richmond and spent most of his adult life there. That's where he practiced law and played a leading role in many of the landmark cases that brought an end to forced

segregation. But it was on Roanoke's Gilmer Avenue where Hill spent most of his childhood and where he began his law practice in 1934.

When the work is complete, the house will re-open as a community law center where senior citizens can go for legal assistance.

"Mr. Hill in his last year was always interested in justice and the acquisition of legal services and the making available of legal services to everyone," says Clarence Dunnville with the Oliver White Hill Foundation. "We're trying to do that."

Students from the Washington and Lee University Law School will staff the center with help from the Roanoke Bar Association, Blue Ridge Legal Services, and the Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley.

"It's an enormous honor that we feel really, to be to participate in this outreach program and to help develop something that will honor his memory," says Mary Natkin with Washington and Lee.

Hill died last August at the age of 100. The Hill foundation hopes the home where he grew up will become a living legacy of the civil rights legend.



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