Mayor Judy Kennedy summed it up best on a hot and steamy August afternoon.

“It’s not every week that you earn a high school diploma and have a street named after you.”

But that’s exactly what happened to Frederica Warner last week. Less than 24 hours after she received her high school diploma (see page 18), she was back in the shadow of Newburgh Free Academy. A portion of Roe Street, where the spry 99 year-old spent most of the past three decades, was renamed Frederica Warner Way, Friday, as a slew of city and county officials and many friends and admirers watched.

Warner dropped out of high school to take care of her family and has also found time to take care of her community. She founded Meals on Wheels of Greater Newburgh in 1972 to meet a major need of the city. All meals are freshly-prepared in a commercial kitchen and delivered at noontime by “dedicated, caring volunteers who also help to brighten the day with a friendly visit,” according to the Meals on Wheels website. Warner, who will celebrate her 100th birthday in December, remains active in the organization, serving as Executive Director Emeritus.

“When you have somebody that has had a life of service, she’s 100 years old, a life of service: constantly working, either initiating something or contributing to someone else’s efforts, to make the city a better place, you don’t find many people that selfless and that willing to just keep going and keep doing,” said Kennedy.

“Naming this portion of the street for her, I think, is a way of saying to people, ‘This is the way you do it. This is the power that moves things forward in a positive way,’ and she did that.”

Warner said she wanted Newburgh to shine like it once did.

“I want Newburgh to shine the way it did when I was a little kid.”

Frederica Warner, founder of Meals on Wheels of Greater Newburgh, with Robin Bello, the organization’s current executive director.