

Kalamazoo Public Schools

EXCELSIOR

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YEARS OF
STORIES

October 2022 • Volume 25, Issue 9



First Day 2022-23

Heading Into the New School Year with Smiles

(MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 8)

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PAGE 13



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Welcome Back to a New School Year!

STUDENTS, I hope you're ready and excited to work.

Wait, did I just hear you moan?

Was that a groan!?!

Did I hear you say, "But, I don't want to work..."

**A Message
from the
Superintendent**



Dr. Rita Raichoudhuri

I know I didn't hear you tell your mom that you don't have anything due tomorrow — when you know there is that assignment smushed into the deepest depths of your backpack. I

know you didn't just complain to your dad that you didn't learn ANYTHING today.

Oh my dearest students, there is so much to do, and you are so lucky because you have the best job in the world.

Everyday, you get to read. You get to learn about great moments in history. You get to explore the reasons why our world works the way it does. You get to make great art and wonderful music. You get to build strong bodies — and even stronger minds.

You get to participate in the best, most fascinating, most important job there is: Learning.

I can hear the groans and sighs. I think I even heard a few eyes roll. (I'm like your mom that way.)

But hear me out.

There is absolutely nothing more exciting than learning. It is behind every great discovery, every great invention, every new and interesting thought that grows in the world. These are not random assignments you are given every day. They are opportunities to develop the skills and

knowledge that will enable you to do more and more amazing things.

For instance, you learn to read not just so you can decipher the alphabet. Yes, it might start that way, but eventually you will use those amazing reading skills to understand the world. It might be as simple as being able to follow the directions in a recipe, but that skill will also help you understand great discoveries, make intelligent arguments, and accurately decipher important facts.

You are studying history because it teaches you about great triumphs to admire — but more importantly — great mistakes to avoid. You study math not just because it enables you to calculate a bill, but because if you continue to study, it might help you unlock the secrets of the universe.

If you read through this *Excelsior*, you'll find a story about a young man

named Douglas Williams II, who like you was once a student in Kalamazoo Public Schools. One of his favorite classes as a high school student was English, because he realized his teacher was not teaching him just how to read and write but because she was teaching him how to think about possibilities in the world.

Now, he is an engineer, and not just any engineer. He is an engineer who has been working on the Webb Space Telescope, which recently launched and is sending back never-before-seen images of the universe.

His work is exploring the farthest reaches of space. And that work began with this work — the work you are doing right now to build your minds into infinite and wonderful tools to explore our world and beyond.

Have a great school year — and do some amazing work!



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This activity is brought to you in partnership with the City of Kalamazoo and support from other grant funding partners.

5 STEPS To Get Your Furnace Winter Ready

Check and Change Your
Furnace Filter

Make Sure the Thermostat
is Working Properly

Ensure That All Heating Vents
Are Completely Uncovered

Switch Your Furnace Thermostat
From Cooling to Heating

Make Sure the Furnace's Burners
are Free of Dust and Debris

Checking your furnace early can save you from making an emergency service call this winter.

Best Advice for Dealing with the FAFSA: Just Get Started

START NOW. Update often.

Many parents are intimidated by thoughts of tackling the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), but as with most things in life, the earlier you start the better, said Alisha Cederberg, associate dean of student experiences and director of financial aid at Kalamazoo Valley Community College.

The FAFSA is the form that college students must complete to be considered for federal financial aid and most scholarships. The application this year opens on Oct. 2.

KVCC will hold a FAFSA informational session at 7 p.m. Oct. 17 as part of its annual College Night which runs 6 – 7:30 p.m. Go to <https://www.kvcc.edu/admissions/collegenight/> to register for College Night, which will include about 80 colleges and universities. The 30-minute FAFSA workshop will cover the basic language of the form and the steps to getting started.

“We want to kick start people into doing it as soon as they are comfortable,” Cederberg said.

Additionally, KVCC holds FAFSA Nights every Tuesday from 4:30 – 6 p.m. Financial aid officers will walk families through the application — even if their student has no intention of attending KVCC.

“If it serves the needs of our community, we’re happy to help you do the FAFSA,” Cederberg said. “We want people to come in and use our community resources. If they feel more confident, they’ll get it done earlier.”

She said the college used to designate certain Tuesdays for FAFSA workshops and assigned different schools different nights, but the financial aid office decided it would be more useful to simply open their office hours to anyone who needed help.

“It shouldn’t feel like a struggle and we’re happy to make it not feel that way,” she said.

To schedule a group parent visit or for simple questions, like how do you reset the password, families can feel free to contact the KVCC financial aid office at (269) 488-4231 or finaid@kvcc.edu.

Cederberg offers these tips for preparing for a FAFSA consultation:

1. Bring your tax records. Have your hands on your 2021 taxes. A lot of times FAFSA will retrieve the information while you’re completing the form, but in the event the system can’t, it’s good to have the actual documents with you. Plus, they’re full of useful information, such as Social Security numbers. Also, put someone in charge of making sure they have the documents before you leave the house.

2. Make sure you have your W2 form. Often it’s



Alisha Cederberg, associate dean of student experiences and director of financial aid, KVCC

included in the tax packet, but sometimes it’s not. The W2 is different than your tax forms.

3. Do your best. Cederberg said she has 17 years of experience with the FAFSA, including training from the federal government, and even she will sometimes still have questions. Questions are OK. “If you have a question, we can follow up. It doesn’t have to be perfect.”

4. Update often. The form doesn’t have to be completed on the first try. It can be saved and updated. There’s no limit on making corrections. “If we make a mistake, we can go back in and fix it. We can do this all day.”

5. Your student should help. Cederberg said “100



You can schedule an appointment for FAFSA help at Kalamazoo Valley Community College by calling (269) 488-4231 or emailing finaid@kvcc.edu.

You do not need to attend KVCC.

percent students should be there completing the FAFSA with assistance from their parents.” Students should be able to complete the form themselves in their second and third years.

6. Discuss marital status issues before you begin. That is the most commonly made error on the FAFSA. These include questions about divorce, custody and income. It’s not intuitive, Cederberg said.

7. Push send. If the deadline is approaching, it’s better to submit than to wait to have it done perfectly. There are deadlines for school aid and scholarships. If the school has questions, they will contact you.

“A lot of people think completing the FAFSA is the end of the process,” she said. “In a lot of ways it’s the beginning. A lot of schools will have their own financial aid forms.”

And here’s a secret that she said financial offices do not do a good job of sharing: They want to give you the money you qualify for. It’s unlikely that a family would make one mistake on the form and find themselves losing out on an award.

“If there’s a problem on the form, we’re going to want to make sure that gets fixed too. We want to make sure we give money to the right families,” she said. “We’re trying to get the money to the people who we said we were going to give it to, to the people who need it.”

Started Kalamazoo’s first legislative Youth Advisory Council

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First Grade Book Fun at KPL



First grade teacher Amy Eastman helps her students, from left, Camilla Batchelor, Reshonn Streeter, and Jaylind Phipps-Ivory as they check books out with Ida Robinson.



R'Moni Cullom shows off "Wet Pet," which she chose to check out during a class trip to learn about the library. Behind her, Grace Williams looks through her own book.



Bill Caskey, the lead librarian at the Alma Powell Branch of the Kalamazoo Public Library, reads a story to students from Woodward School for Technology and Research.



Woodward student Zy'Mir Richardson looks at books. All first graders visit the public library during the school year.

Family Information Sessions Planned for Academically Talented Youth Program

THE ACADEMICALLY Talented Youth Program (ATYP) at Western Michigan University offers advanced and accelerated math and English classes for students beginning in seventh and eighth grade.

ATYP offers participating students a way to learn challenging material at an accelerated pace, engage with other academically advanced students, develop a strong work ethic and grow valuable study skills.

Many ATYP students go on to attend the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center and select four-year universities. ATYP students come to the WMU campus one or two afternoons a week to attend class with other students from throughout Southwest Michigan.

Tuition is paid for by the students' home school districts. Families pay a per-semester registration fee that is waived if the family qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch.

Students can enroll in ATYP after receiving qualifying scores on an entrance exam or through a portfolio process. Sixth and seventh grade students who have recently received an email or letter from the ATYP office are encouraged to test for entrance for the 2023-24 school year.

Families can learn more about ATYP by attending an informational session, which will be held from mid-October through mid-November at Western Michigan University. A presentation for Kalamazoo Public Schools families is scheduled at 4 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 13, in Room 1910 of WMU's Sangren Hall.

Families unable to attend that day are welcome to attend a presentation at any other location. Virtual presentation dates will also be available. The complete dates, times, and locations of the meetings will be listed at www.wmich.edu/precollege/atyp/qualifying.

ATYP also offers an AP Computer Science A class that is available to any student who has completed Algebra I. No minimum test score is required for this class. APCSA teaches students programming skills and analytical thinking by using multimedia labs in the Java programming language. Any student interested in learning to program is welcome to participate in this yearlong course which meets two afternoons per week on the WMU campus.

For more information, visit wmich.edu/precollege/atyp or email atyp-info@wmich.edu or call (269) 387-3553.



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Dr. Rita Raichoudhuri

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The District will not tolerate or condone any act of bias or discrimination toward any person on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, gender identification, height, weight, familial status, marital status, sexual orientation, and disability in any of its activities, hiring practices, programs or services.

Inquiries by students and/or their parents/guardians should be directed to:

Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Student Services

Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0161

All other inquiries should be directed to:

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources

Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0177

District Directory at:
www.kalamazoopublicschools.com

Recipe

from the KPS Food Service, Chartwells

Kirsten Strong, registered dietician

Samuel Dunn, executive chef

Roasted Pumpkin Seeds with Brown Butter and Sage

FALL IS upon us! This elevated but simple roasted pumpkin seed recipe from *Serious Eats* is perfect for fall football gatherings, a fireside autumn snack, or munching while you hand out candy on Halloween. The smell of the brown butter and sage will have your mouth watering and your home smelling festive. The best part of all is that you have to carve a pumpkin in order to get your ingredients. So, put on a spooky movie and a cozy sweater and get to it!



INGREDIENTS

2 cups pumpkin seeds
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage leaves, plus more for garnishing
1 tablespoon lemon juice
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Carefully wash pumpkin seeds to remove all excess pulp. Transfer pumpkin seeds to a paper towel-lined rimmed

baking sheet. Allow to rest at room temperature until completely dry, about 1 hour. To speed up the process, dry pumpkin seeds in a 200°F oven, stirring occasionally for a few minutes.

2. In a small skillet, heat butter, swirling. After about 5 minutes the butter will start to foam. This is when you want to watch the butter like a hawk, stirring it around with your spatula to prevent the milk solids from sticking

to the bottom of the pan.

You can tell the butter is browning because dark golden flecks (browned milk solids) will appear in the melted butter, which will start to smell nutty and toasty. Keep an eye on the butter. It can go from good to bad in a matter of seconds. When golden brown, immediately add chopped sage leaves and lemon juice (the butter will spatter, so stand back!). Remove brown butter from heat.

3. Adjust oven rack to center position and preheat oven to 325°F. In a large bowl, toss dried pumpkin seeds with brown butter mixture and season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet. Roast until pale golden brown, stirring occasionally, about 25 minutes total.

4. Remove seeds from oven and immediately transfer to a serving bowl. Toss with additional chopped sage leaves and serve.

Makes: 2 cups

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Kalamazoo Public Schools graduate Douglas Williams II can say that his work has literally gone where no person has gone before.

Williams, 27, a 2013 graduate of Kalamazoo Central High School, is an engineer at the aerospace and defense engineering firm Northrop Grumman in California. And, although he joined the firm as a systems test engineer, he leapt at the opportunity to become an alignment engineer and join the team working on the James Webb Space Telescope, which is peering back in time to capture never-before-seen images of deep space.

You can read more about his work on the telescope in a story the *Excelsior* is republishing from Jackson State University, Williams' alma mater.

The 27-year-old attended Spring Valley Center for Exploration and Washington Writers' Academy before going onto Hillside Middle School and Kalamazoo Central High School. He is the son of Wyndi Harper-Williams, a behavior specialist at Milwood Magnet School, and the grandson of Hank Harper, former principal of Lakeside School and assistant principal of South Junior High School — now Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts.

After graduating from Kalamazoo Central, he attended Jackson State University, which is an HBCU. Even though he resisted suggestions to attend an historically black college or university, he said it was a life-changing decision.

"My mom and granddad both went. They were pretty adamant it was an experience that would change my life," Williams said. "Being a young black person going from being a minority in a country to being a majority is an experience that reshapes how you see life and yourself. I wouldn't change anything if I had to go back and do it again."

After college, he joined Northrop Grumman as a systems test engineer, but to join the Webb Telescope project he took the position of an alignment engineer, helping calibrate precise adjustments to the telescope and aid in its successful launch and ability to send back amazing deep-space images.

"The Webb is like the 4K Ultra HD version of the Hubble Telescope. It's seeing back in time and is capable of showing us the formation of the earliest galaxies in the universe."



KC, Jackson State University Alum Helps Launch Webb Telescope in Search for Mysteries of Life

Courtesy of L.A. Warren/Jackson State University Newsroom

IF INTELLIGENT life is discovered on another planet, Jackson State University may be able to boast that it played a role in that discovery, because one of its alums recently helped launch the world's most powerful telescope — one that can peer back 13.5 billion years — well before humans populated the Earth.

The joy of being part of the team that developed the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) sent

Douglas J. Williams II, 26, over the moon, figuratively speaking. Now, he's eagerly awaiting images of the universe that have never been seen before.

The Kalamazoo native and College of Science, Engineering and Technology alum earned his bachelor's degree in computer engineering in 2019.

Williams lives in Los Angeles and has worked nearly three years for aerospace

and defense giant Northrop Grumman, one of the prime contractors that developed the telescope. Williams is an engineer with the alignments team, which played an integral part in supporting test and on-earth mechanical deployment procedures for the Webb telescope.

'JWST IS CONFIGURED DOWN TO THE THOUSANDTH OF AN INCH'

If any part of the telescope's structural apparatus moved, "nine times out of 10 we were involved," Williams said. "That's not to say we single-handedly owned any one responsibility. After all, we worked in conjunction with 100-plus other incredible engineers."

He added that "JWST is configured down to the thousandth of an inch, and my team used metrology (the science of measurement) to keep deployments within the necessary tolerances. We aided in JWST's

last opening on the ground and in simulating zero gravity with the offloading team. We monitored Webb daily in order to minimize internal stresses that tend to arise during earthquakes and deployment processes."

Williams said his team also assisted in aligning Webb's high-gain antenna to enable it to send and receive signals to and from Earth. "Being one of the new members on the team, I really appreciated getting to learn on such an impactful project."

Williams said he first learned about space-deployed telescopes when he was a student at Kalamazoo Central High School. He wants others to explore opportunities beyond Earth.

"If my words reach any tech-savvy young brothers and sisters with a passion for tinkering and creating, I hope you give STEM a try. Don't get me wrong, all the math courses can be daunting, but I think it's worth it," Williams said. "This journey absolutely has been incredible. JSU gave



Douglas Williams II is on the lift preparing to make an adjustment to the James Webb Telescope.

Doug Williams *(continued from page 6)*

me the learning environment I needed to develop.”

Williams said that during his orientation at Northrop Grumman, his manager casually mentioned that the company was building a telescope. She told him he could view it on the public observation deck. “She didn’t mention it was Webb. Out of curiosity, I walked over and opened the door, and, to my surprise, Webb was staring right back at me. I pretty much spent most of my lunches going to the viewing room from then on.”

Eventually, his manager asked if he’d like to work alignments on Webb, and Williams said, “Absolutely!” He said he was beyond excited to be part of a “historic project that promises to rewrite our science textbooks.”

WEBB’S INFRARED ABILITY

A few months later, Williams began working on the largest, most powerful space telescope ever built. Webb is the successor to the Hubble Telescope, whose defining feature was its ability to look at the universe through ultraviolet and visible



Douglas Williams II
suited up to
work on the
Webb Telescope.

wavelengths. In contrast, Webb sees primarily in infrared, enabling it to look back billions of years to the first light after the Big Bang.

Williams said the recent launch went so well that experts expect the telescope will have enough fuel to be operational well beyond its previously estimated 10-year lifespan.

“It was a very surreal experience — one that I was grateful to be able to share with my family on Christmas Day 2021,” which was the day of the launch.

Now that JWST has reached its final orbit in space after a month-long journey, Williams said, “I think that discovering potential life-bearing planets will

be one of the greatest discoveries Webb makes. I’ve always thought that humanity was not alone in the universe, but I never considered that I would have anything to do with that discovery when the time came. I can’t wait to see what we find.”

Williams said that once Webb’s 18-hexagonal mirrors are fully calibrated he hopes astronomers will start implementing their Hycean planet research in pursuit of discovering alien life.

“Hycean planets are a type of exoplanet that are hotter than normal and are covered in oceans,” he said. “They may have conditions to support early life, and their habitable zones are larger than those of Earth-like planets. So, there might be a better chance at locating them.”

The challenge now, Williams said, is for “earthlings” to “show respect and dignity toward others regardless of race, creed, nationality, gender, sexual orientation or disability.”

“It would be unfortunate for humanity to discover life on other planets without first learning how to properly treat one another on Earth.”

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District Accomplishments as a Board Member

- Enthusiastically worked to pass **350 million dollars** in district bonds and a millage with voters' support
- Strengthened **student safety** and increased **Social Emotional Learning** opportunities
- **Career Pathways Program** launched in 2021
- **Newcomers Centers** for students new to the country
- Working to increase graduation rates for all

Issues I will continue to advocate for

- Increase **Career Exploration** for students
- Greater focus on nontraditional pathways of learning so that all students have the **opportunity** to reach their potential
- Ensure all **KPS Students & Staff** are in **safe and secure schools**
- Continued commitment to **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**
- Emphasis on Pre-Kindergarten - Secondary enrollment & curriculum that better prepares all students for their school experience

First Day of School Scenes from Around the District



Elijah French, left, and Tamiyah Gardner are KPS. They shared smiles at King-Westwood Elementary School.



Adalina Vega Alvarado, center, and Julian Vega Alvarado wait for the start of school at Woods Lake.



Washington Writers' Academy fourth-grader A'Kiyla Gardenhire-Austin waves at staff as she arrives on the first day of school.



First day of school fun with Kalamazoo Central students, from left, Tyree Warren, Zion Crawford, Dennis Loveall, and Romari Phillips.



Special education paraprofessional Christine Collins gives students, from left, Mason Ferguson, Leon Clopton, and Angel Rozier wristbands so they know which buses to take home after the first day of school at Washington Writers' Academy.



Chloe and Naomi Reed celebrate the first day of school with style at Edison Academy.



Bus riders arrive for the first day at King-Westwood Elementary.



PEEP teacher Lesa Burtis helps Eliana Martinez-Banks and Isaac Banks find their classes at Edison.

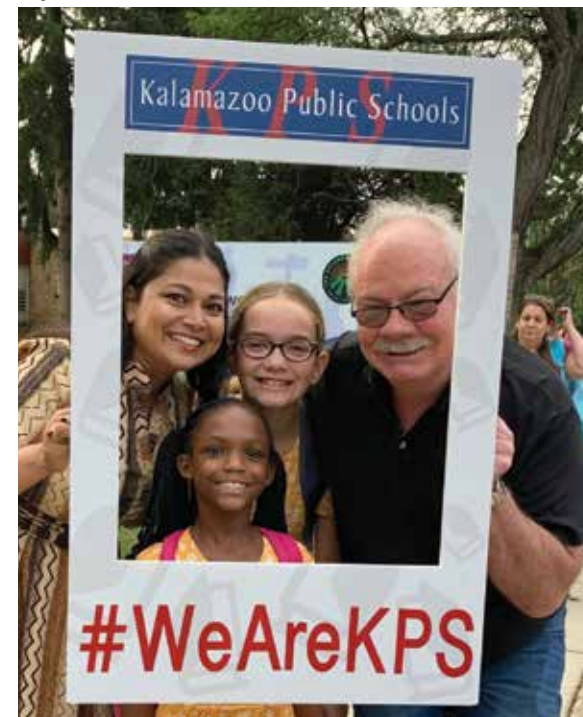


Second grader Dedrick "DJ" Davis Jr. looks handsome in red on the first day of school at Washington Writers' Academy.

ON THE COVER:

Kalamazoo Central students are ready for the new year, from left, Samantha Pocopio, Natalia Boldt, Asia Hoehle, Cassandra Grooten, Faisal Bin-Mahfouz, Cristina Guanon, Ava Schwachter, Lauren To, and Lydia Johnson.

Lillian Start, top center, and Tayja Start, bottom, pose for a first day of school photo with KPS Superintendent Dr. Rita Raichoudhuri, far left, and their grandfather Gary Start, former KPS deputy superintendent for business and finance.



Julius Goodman can't wait for the start of the first day of school. Israel Ortiz and Mary Bailey help students off the bus.



Teacher Damon Travis escorts Simon and Steve Clark into Edison Academy for the first day of the 2022-23 school year.

Meet Parkwood-Upjohn Assistant Principal Sierra Prather

SIERRA PRATHER joined Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary School as its new assistant principal this fall. Prather, who is a Kalamazoo Public Schools graduate, comes to Parkwood after 14 years as a classroom teacher.



Sierra Prather

What are you most excited about in your new position?

I am super excited to embrace this new journey as an assistant principal at Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary because I will be able to advocate for student academic success on a larger scale and cultivate positive, long-lasting relationships in the community.

What made you decide you wanted to move into an assistant principal position?

The passion that I have for the youth in our community is a huge motivator for my move to becoming an assistant principal. I have been

under great leadership and learned so much through observation and experiences. I am honored to be able to work collaboratively with staff, teachers, families, and all community stakeholders to help pour into the success of our students. I proudly attended and graduated from Kalamazoo Public Schools and have worked for KPS as a kindergarten and fifth grade teacher for 14 years. My time as an educator has given me real-world experiences with students and a deeper understanding of teaching and learning strategies needed to help achieve student success.

What's your best advice for students on how to succeed?

Kobe Bryant once said, "No matter how difficult the challenge is, always stay positive and believe in yourself." The best advice I could give students is to never give up on yourselves. You are capable of greatness. It is important to challenge yourselves, to try new things, and to read.

What would you like parents to know about you and your mission as an educator?

I genuinely want the best for all students, and I am devoted to our students. My mission is to help create a safe, positive environment where students have meaningful and engaging experiences so they are successful in the future. As an assistant principal, I will support educators so they can continue to grow as leaders to help promote the best learning experiences for our students. I truly believe that working with parents and other community partners can benefit student learning, because school is a place where working as a team gets you closer to the dream.

Tell us something fun about yourself.

One of my favorite things to do is laugh. I watch movies, TV shows, read books, and spend time with friends and family that make me laugh. I also enjoy drawing and painting during my spare time. Some other things I enjoy are listening to music, watching basketball and football, and watching dance competitions.

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Meet King–Westwood Assistant Principal Erika Zavasky

ERIKA ZAVASKY joined King–Westwood Elementary School as its new assistant principal this fall. Zavasky has been a teacher at Edison Academy and a climate and culture coach at Hillside Middle School.



Erika Zavasky

What are you most excited about in your new position?

I am most excited to serve the King–Westwood community! I value building relationships with students, staff, parents and other key stakeholders. I feel honored to have the opportunity to serve our community in a larger capacity. I have served under some great leaders and I am so excited to

work side-by-side with Principal Dwight Quinn.

What made you decide you wanted to move into an assistant principal position?

I knew that I wanted to serve students not only within a classroom — but the whole build-

ing. When students walked into Edison Academy, where I taught, they were one of “my students” even if they were not in my classroom. It is so incredibly important to build relationships with every student and with every parent that brings their child in the building. When I knew I wanted to seek an administrative position, I started changing grade levels. In my 14 years, I have taught K-6 and served as the climate and culture coach at Hillside Middle School. My focus has always been “we do what’s best for kids” and I am excited to be a part of a culture that strives to do that.

What’s your best advice for students on how to succeed?

Make a goal and come up with a path. Throughout life, there will be bumps in the road, try not to get off the path. If you do get off the path, you can find a way to get back on! You will meet many cheerleaders on your team, let them help you. I will be one of those cheerleaders.

What would you like parents to know about you and your mission as an educator?

I am very student-focused and believe that every kid can learn and achieve. When students walk through the door, we should be focusing on all aspects of development. By working as a team, we can meet the needs of the students that we serve. I will always do what’s best for kids and will lead by example. My mission is to grow students to their fullest potential.

Tell us something fun about yourself.

I played basketball in school and I hold the record at Pentwater High School for the most points scored in a game. I love camping, going to the beach and being outside in my free time. My husband Eric and I have a son, Reid, and a cat named Thor and a dog named Finn. I can wiggle my ears. Tacos and chicken wings are my favorite foods. I love anything spicy! I’ve swum with dolphins and spiders don’t scare me, but I am terrified of alligators and crocodiles. I was born in England. My dad was in the Air Force.



Monday, October 17

5–7 pm | Central Library | All Ages

Let Dustin Pari guide you through a haunted house! Costumes welcome.



Saturday, October 15, 2022

**11 am–3 pm | Kalamazoo County Expo Center
Fairgrounds | All Ages**

Nerds unite at this free comic-con!

**Check out these fun KPL events this fall!
Visit kpl.gov to learn more.**



Kalamazoo
Public Library
kpl.gov

Meet Woods Lake Elementary Assistant Principal Glenda Jones

GLENDA JONES is the new assistant principal at Woods Lake Elementary: A Magnet Center for the Arts. Jones was a special education teacher at Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary School, and she worked in the Chicago area for 24 years before joining Kalamazoo Public Schools.



Glenda Jones

What made you decide you wanted to move into an assistant principal position?

My desire to help teachers and students reach their full potential played a major role in my decision to move into an assistant principal position. In Chicago, I served as both an assistant principal and principal.

What do you think are the most pressing issues facing families right now?

One pressing issue facing families right now is fear of their children's safety when they leave home each day. Whether it be going to school, hanging out at a friend's house, going to the gro-

cery store or even a public event, the uncertainty of their safety is heavy on parents. With the recent incidents of shootings around the country and increased violence in our world, keeping children safe is a pressing issue for me as a parent.

What's your best advice for students on how to succeed?

No one has your mind, your heart, or your creativity. Your individuality is what makes you unique. Use your gifts and talents to achieve your goals. Not all days will be perfect or successful, and that is OK. Failure isn't the end of the world. Learning from your mistakes and refining your technique is how you grow in life. A successful person doesn't give up when they fail, they try again and again until they achieve success. Always set goals for yourself and never be afraid to try. You will never know how much you can accomplish unless you try.

What would you like parents to know about you and your mission as an educator?

I would like parents to know that not only am I a

dedicated educator with over 26 years of experience, but I am also a parent. I understand the challenges parents face and the concerns they experience when they send their children to school. Like them, I trust that when I send my children to school each day, they will be surrounded by people who can see their full potential and pull out the best in them. As an educator, I treat all children in my school as my own. I want them to see the best in themselves and believe they can achieve greatness.

Tell us something fun about yourself.

I am a mother of two awesome children. I love laughing at corny jokes and watching funny prank videos. My favorite food is homemade tacos. I enjoy veganizing my favorite foods and having family and friends try them out. I make a delicious vegan chocolate cake. In my younger days, I was very athletic. I played many sports: basketball, volleyball, softball and ran track. My favorite sport is volleyball. It is truly a team sport where you have to be in sync with each other and work together.



Oscar C., Graphic Design

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Pathway Coaches Help Students Navigate Promise Application Process

THE KALAMAZOO Promise is a free scholarship — but that doesn't mean there isn't a little work that goes into ensuring the funds are there and ready to be accessed.

Luckily for students, there is help available to ensure students have everything in order to take advantage of The Promise, the scholarship program that covers tuition and mandatory fees at almost every state college and university for Kalamazoo Public Schools graduates who meet residency and attendance requirements.

Melissa Nesbitt, Trenae Dunigan and DaTavia Moore are the Promise Pathway Coaches. Dunigan works at Kalamazoo Central. Moore is the new coach, hired to serve Loy Norrix High School. Nesbitt, the Pathway Coach manager, serves Phoenix High School, Kalamazoo Innovative Learning Program and the KPS Virtual Program.

The Pathway Coaches program launched in 2019 as a way to better serve the growing number of students taking advantage of the scholarship. Coaches not only help the students register for The Promise, but can offer advice and support for students and families as they figure out graduation requirements, file the FAFSA for federal financial aid, find other scholarships, complete college essays, visit colleges and other key senior year activities.

"We really want to help with anything that will help students progress seamlessly into post secondary, which could be a trade or a community college or a four-year university," Dunigan said.

Students fall into one of three tiers for the coaches, with Tier 3 students needing little help other than being told to fill out the application form, whereas Tier 1 students may need assistance with educational support, finding support programs in their post-secondary environments, and locating scholarships to help cover the cost of college.

"You may have a student who needs help completing their application," Nesbitt said. "They don't know where they're going to college. We'll do research together, what is it that you're interested in, what don't you want to do," Nesbitt said. "And, I could have one touchpoint with a student and they'll be good to go."

Although The Promise attempts to make the process of applying for and claiming the scholarship as simple as possible, there are some mandatory steps students and families should make sure are completed.

1. Students should register to create an online account at kalamazoopromise.com. Students can create the account their senior year. It helps staff keep track of forms and applications. Later, it will help students



The Kalamazoo Promise Pathway Coaches are, from left, Melissa Nesbitt, DaTavia Moore, and Trenae Dunigan.

keep track of post secondary credits and how much money is still available for student use.

2. Seniors should make sure they complete their Promise application form. Most students will do this at fall registration at school, but some students fall through the cracks. If a student did not complete the form at registration, the forms can be found on The Promise website.

3. Students should complete the college acceptance form, which allows The Promise to access post-secondary school records to ensure students are enrolled full time and maintain at least a 2.0 GPA, which are required to maintain the scholarship.

The coaches are at the schools three days a week,



located either in or near the school counseling offices, but those are not the only times coaches are available for consultation. They schedule meetings in the Promise office and are available for calls and emails.

Dunigan and Nesbitt urge students to check in with their school

counselors early. The college application process can be overwhelming, so checking in sooner than later may help ease anxiety.

As of the summer of 2021, the Promise has awarded \$165 million in scholarships, and Promise Scholars have completed about 3,400 credentials.

And Nesbitt and Dunigan emphasize that even if you've missed all of the deadlines earlier in your senior year, haven't used the Promise scholarship for the last five years, or started a post-secondary program and did not complete it — there may still be time to tap the scholarship.

KPS graduates have up to 10 years after graduating from high school to use the scholarship. Call the office and ask to speak with a coach.

"We can get you reconnected," Nesbitt said.

WHAT'S NEW



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Kalamazoo Community Foundation Promises a Wide Range of Scholarship Opportunities

THE KALAMAZOO Community Foundation offers more than \$1.5 million in scholarships annually — and unlike some may think, they're not just for the kids who aced every class.

"I think there is this perception that scholarships are just for people who graduated at the top of their class with a 1600 SAT score. We're really working to change that narrative," said Laura Galaviz, scholarship director for the foundation. "We have one where the donors actually say it shouldn't go to a student who has a super high GPA because they want to invest in a student who shows potential but who perhaps didn't rise to the top of the class."

The Kalamazoo Community Foundation is almost 100 years old and its scholarship program has been part of its mission for about 70 of those years. And, within the last 50 years the organization has really built its scholarship holdings.

It now has about "61-ish" scholarships. Community members continue to generously add to the roster of available scholarships. Three new funds will be available in the spring of 2023 for distribution in the fall.

The application process begins Jan. 1 and continues through March 1, but students and their families can visit the foundation website, www.kalfound.org/scholarships, now to begin scoping out available scholarships.

"There's really something for everyone," Galaviz said.

WHAT IS AVAILABLE

When she says there's something for everyone, she likes to point to the George L. Disborough Trout Unlimited Research Grant. "I always think we're not going to get anyone applying and every year there are at least two or three applicants," she said.

There are scholarships for students who played different sports, for students who have lost a parent or spent time in foster care, for students from specific geographic areas. Galaviz's goal is to disburse all of those scholarships every year.

"The only reason we wouldn't give out a particular scholarship is if there were no eligible applicants," she said.

One of the foundation's newest and most innovative scholarships is its Emergency Scholarship Fund. Offered on a rolling basis throughout the year, it provides up to \$1,000 for emergency educational

costs, such as books, holds on accounts, or a laptop that suddenly goes kaput.

Launched in August of 2021 to help students deal with financial crises caused by Covid, it was renewed with more funds by the foundation board this year.

"We just needed the responsiveness of this scholarship, because we know if a student has to take a semester off, the likelihood of them coming back drops significantly" she said.

"Our intent is to help fill the need so students can stay enrolled and get their education."

The Emergency Scholarship Fund committee meets every two weeks and once an application is approved, a check can usually be cut within days.

The foundation's largest scholarship is the Remynse Scholarship, which provides significant renewable support based on student need for Kalamazoo County graduating seniors or college freshmen. It can be renewed for up to three additional years.

There are actually five scholarships that were created in the name of community leaders with ties to Kalamazoo Public Schools: former teacher and Kalamazoo County Commissioner Eva Ozier; Hillside Principal Dorothy Young and her husband, Curtis Young, a teacher; former KPS board trustee Duane Roberts; former English teacher Mildred McConkey; and former counselor Mary Ruth Robinson.

The Duane Roberts Scholarship is one of Galaviz's favorites because it recognizes students for their participation in social justice, which was one of Roberts' passions.



Chanel Wilson, a 2022 Loy Norrix graduate, is the recipient of a KCF Scholarship.

Photo by Casey Spring

While 55 percent of the scholarships are need-based, 45 percent are not. Many are renewable, which provides some important stability for students, so they don't need to wonder where they will find financial aid every year, and there are several scholarships designed to meet the needs of graduate students.

"That's critical because students can't get federal Pell Grants for graduate school. That falls off and you're really left to your own devices," Galaviz said.

EASIER THAN EVER APPLICATION

The key for finding out if you're eligible is to apply, and the foundation has made that easier than ever.

For many years, students who were interested in applying for a scholarship had to read through the list of scholarships and to apply to each one separately.

But, in 2018, the foundation went to a universal application process. Students complete one application that includes about 20 "qualifier" questions that cover things such as extracurricular activities, leadership positions, academic interests, and family background. The applications are reviewed and then students are told which scholarships they may qualify for.

When the application process opens Jan. 1, students will find the process provides a lot of flexibility to accommodate busy schedules.

"We've done everything we can to remove barriers to the application process. We've extended the application window. You can go in and start an essay and come back to finish it later," she said.

There is less emphasis on standardized test scores, which the foundation acknowledges are highly inequitable. And, the dreaded essay question — is no longer something to dread.

"Don't be intimidated by those questions," Galaviz said. "They're really meant to help the committee to get a sense of who you are and how you see the world and what you plan to do. There's not an expectation for perfect grammar and perfect answers. It's really about who you are."

"We want students to think 'maybe this is for me' and to get people who haven't traditionally applied to think about putting in an application."



www.kalfound.org/scholarships

Congratulations to the 2022 KPS Retirees

Kalamazoo Public Schools would like to acknowledge the following employees for their many years of service to the district. Retirees were honored with a reception in the spring. The district would

Debra Blondin, Milwood Magnet School: A Center for Math, Science and Technology, School Secretary

Steven Boven, Arcadia Elementary School, Custodian

Jennifer Boyer, Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary School, Music Teacher

Leeanne Brookfield, Prairie Ridge Elementary, Reading Recovery Teacher

Sharon Brown, Administration Building — Finance Department, Purchasing Supervisor

Kimberly Bryce, Washington Writers' Academy, Teacher Grades 4 and 5

Larita Childress, Woods Lake Elementary: A Magnet Center for the Arts, Special Education Teacher

Johnny Dangerfield, Administration Building — Instructional & Information Technology, Senior Programmer

Sandra Delorey, King-Westwood Elementary School, Special Education Teacher

Linda Farrell, Arcadia Elementary School, Secretary

like to express its sincere gratitude for all that these retirees have done throughout the years to support, nurture, and educate the students of Kalamazoo Public Schools. Best wishes for a happy retirement.

Olga Gamboa, Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts, Classroom Paraprofessional

Katreka Goins-Williams, Administration Building — Human Resources, Secretary

Odis Haynes, Kalamazoo Central High School, Special Education Paraprofessional

Karen Kempe, Washington Writers' Academy, Tech Support Technician

Kevin Koch, Linden Grove Middle School, Science Teacher

Debra Kuntzman, Loy Norrix High School, Secretary

Richard LaPorte, Transportation, Bus Driver

Carol Little, Facilities Management, Custodian

Kimberley Mansfield, King-Westwood Elementary School, Teacher Grade 4 (Kim passed away in May shortly after announcing her plans to retire.)

Thomas Martinic, Hillside Middle School, Strategic Reading Teacher

Wayne Mayfield, Facilities Management, Custodian

Richard McElroy, Linden Grove Middle School, Special Education Teacher

Barbara Minar, Hillside Middle School, Science Teacher (Retired 2021)

Rhonda Orchanian, Administration Building — Student Services, Special Education Occupational Therapist

Robert Rapp, Facilities Management, Electrician

Jill Rogowski, Kalamazoo Central High School, Special Education Teacher

Robert Roy, Kalamazoo Central High School, Marketing/DECA Teacher

Julie Schmidt, KRESA, Virtual Elementary Teacher

Denise Turner, Administration Building — Human Resources, Administrative Assistant

Cindy VanLieu, Loy Norrix High School, Art Teacher

Barbara Watson, Administration Building — Human Resources, Supertech

Chalene Watson, Facilities Management, Custodian

Joyce Wells, Administration Building — Instruction and Student Services, Instructional Secretary

Carol Whitfield, Washington Writers' Academy, PEEP Paraprofessional

Randi Wilhelsmen, Woods Lake Elementary: A Magnet Center for the Arts, Teacher Grade 2 and 3

Deborah Willis, Administration Building — Instruction and Student Services, Lead Secretary





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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE



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IN-PERSON EVENT

SATURDAY, OCT. 15 | NOON - 4 P.M.

CHEMISTRY DAY: "FABULOUS FIBERS: THE CHEMISTRY OF FABRICS"

Conduct experiments led by professionals using dyes, wicking and solar printing. Also enjoy fantastic Chemistry Day favorites!



IN-PERSON EVENT

SATURDAY, OCT. 29 | 2 P.M.

AUSTIN ROUNDS' MARVELOUSLY CREATIVE AND UNBRIDLED ART

Panel discussion with local artist/illustrator Austin Rounds and facilitator Joe Rounds about the recently published book, "WICKED HARVEST: Michigan Monsters & Macabre - 2." Book signing to follow.



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Ooky Spooky | Grades 2 & up | 11 a.m.

This family-friendly light show of 11 Halloween music favorites includes "Monster Mash," "Ghostbusters" and "Thriller."

Living Worlds | Grades 4 & up | 2 p.m.

Journey through space and time to examine life as an essential quality of Earth and how our understanding of it can aid in our search for life beyond our planet.



PUBLIC HOURS: Tuesday - Saturday | 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Sunday | Noon - 4 p.m.

FREE GENERAL ADMISSION

Note: Some areas of the museum may be closed due to exhibit changes, staffing needs, special programs or collections care. We thank you for your patience.

The Kalamazoo Valley Museum is operated by Kalamazoo Valley Community College and is governed by its Board of Trustees.



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